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PART I

"KNOW YOURSELF, KNOW YOUR ENEMY :
A HUNDRED BATTLES, A HUNDRED VICTORIES".

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INTERSECTION

GENERAL

1 The Chief of the Army Staff on 14 December, 1962, instituted an Operations Review to go into the reverses suffered by the Army, particularly in the KAMENG Frontier Division of NEFA. The terms of reference of the Review were to enquire into what went wrong with the following:-

- (a) Training.
- (b) Equipment.
- (c) System of command.
- (d) Physical fitness of the troops.
- (e) Capacity of commanders at all levels to influence the men under their command.

2 The Review was to be carried out by Lieut General TB HENDERSON BROOKS, assisted by Brigadier PS BHAGAT VC. (Chief of the Army Staff letter No 70012/9/COAS, dated 14 December, 1962 - Annexure 1).

3 In order, however, to assess the above aspects, it is necessary, at first, to examine the developments and events prior to the hostilities as also the balance, posture, and strength of the Army at the outbreak of hostilities. With this foundation, it will then be easy to follow the operations as well as understand the reasons and causes for the various actions and the turn in events.

LAYOUT OF THE REVIEW

4 The background of developments and the poise of the Army are more in the strategic sphere and, therefore, the concern of Army Headquarters, and, perhaps, that of the Commands. The operations itself embrace both the strategical as well as the tactical aspect and hence require examination down to Corps level and even lower. It would, therefore, have been convenient and logical to trace the events from Army Headquarters and then move down to Commands for more details, and, finally, ending up with field formations for the battle itself.

5 Review of the functioning of Army Headquarters, however, has not been dealt with on the advice of the Chief of the Army Staff. Thus, perforce, the actions and developments at Army Headquarters have had to be traced from documents available at Command Headquarters. In this process, a number of loose ends concerning Army Headquarters could not be verified and have been left unanswered. The relationship between Defence Ministry and Army Headquarters and the directions given by the former to the latter could, therefore, also not be examined.

6 The major landmarks in the developments on the INDO-TIBET Border, broadly speaking, are as under:-

- (a) In October, 1959, the INDO-TIBET Border became the responsibility of the Army. This was as a result of Chinese aggressive action at LONGJU in NEFA in August, 1959, and at KONGKALA in LADAKH in October, 1959.

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- (b) The introduction of the "Forward Policy" - November/December, 1961.
- (c) The surrounding of GALWAN Post in LADAKH - 10 July, 1962, and DHOLA Post in NEFA - 8 September, 1962.
- (d) The raising of IV Corps and the announcement of the eviction operations - 4 October, 1962.
- (e) The outbreak of hostilities on 20 October, 1962.
- (f) Cease Fire on 21 November, 1962.

7 It will be seen that each of the above events marked successive stages in the border developments and required strategical reappraisal at each stage. Thus, it would be convenient to consider the developments within these stages and at the appropriate levels from Command downwards. It is also obvious that the developments in NEFA were closely correlated to those in LADAKH, and, thus, any study of NEFA operations must be carried out in conjunction with developments and operations in the Western Theatre. The Review, therefore, embraces both Western and Eastern Commands, but, for simplicity, each has been studied separately. Actions on one front that had repercussions on the other have, however, been correlated.

8 The layout of the Review is, therefore, broadly as under:-

PART I

(a) CHAPTER I - WESTERN COMMAND

This Chapter deals with the developments and operations as viewed from Western Command.

(b) CHAPTER II - EASTERN COMMAND

This deals with the developments in NEFA upto the outbreak of hostilities.

(c) CHAPTER III - IV CORPS

This Chapter covers the details of operations in NEFA and includes, where applicable, the command and control exercised at various levels from Army Headquarters downwards.

(d) CHAPTER IV - CONCLUSIONS

This Chapter brings out the salient factors and actions that led to our reverses and the lessons derived from them.

PART II

DETAILED LESSONS

In this are included the detailed lessons, and covers all the facets, as required in the Terms of Reference. These are largely in the tactical sphere and are meant for more general distribution.

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CHAPTER I

WESTERN COMMAND

GENERAL

1 On 26 August, 1959, the Chinese overran our post at LONGJU in NEFA, claiming that it was in the Chinese territory. In October of the same year they ambushed our patrol at KONGKA LA just EAST of our post at HOT SPRING. Here again they claimed that KONGKA LA was in the Chinese territory, though it was 40 - 50 miles inside our territory.

2 These two incidents vividly heralded that the might of CHINA had arrived in TIBET, and they meant to hold their claims by force, if necessary. These incidents also transformed the then dormant INDO-TIBET Border into a live one. In consequence, the Army was made responsible for the border, which, so far, had been looked after by police or semi-military forces.

3 The developments in NEFA will be considered later under Eastern Command. Only LADAKH will be dealt with in this Chapter. The developments in LADAKH fall into three distinct phases and hence this Chapter is divided into sections to correspond with the phases as under:-

- (a) Section 1 - October, 1959, to November/December, 1961, the time of introduction of the "Forward Policy".
- (b) Section 2 - November/December, 1961, to 20 October, 1962, outbreak of hostilities.
- (c) Section 3 - 20 October, 1962, to 21 November, 1962, the date of Cease Fire.
- (d) Section 4 - Conclusion.

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SECTION 1

OCTOBER, 1959 - NOVEMBER/DECEMBER, 1961

GENERAL

1 The period October, 1959 - November/December, 1961 was mainly devoted to the consolidation by the Army of the territory actually in possession of our forces in LADAKH. It was also a period for appraisal of the Chinese threat and for planning and building up of our forces in the LADAKH Sector.

2 An intelligence appreciation was issued by Army Headquarters in October, 1959, and this was followed up by Operational Instruction No 26 issued in February, 1960. It is significant that this was the last operational instruction to be issued by Army Headquarters and was, therefore, current, and could be considered the basis of our planning to meet the Chinese aggression in 1962. How far short were these arrangements in the light of the subsequent build up of the Chinese and other developments on both sides of the border, will be seen in more detail as events unfold themselves. It is thus important that the planning and arrangements than undertaken are studied in some detail.

3 A systematic appraisal was carried out, and, as we have seen, an intelligence appreciation was made. Based on it and the limitation imposed due to the terrain and other factors, tasks were allotted, commensurate with the forces that could be inducted into LADAKH.

4 This process of planning and issue of orders was undertaken at successive levels. It would take a great deal of time and space to examine the planning and orders at each of these levels. Thus these are being grouped together and the general situation existing in 1959-1960 in LADAKH is being dealt with in detail.

SITUATION IN LADAKH - 1959 - 1960

Chinese threat

5 The Chinese were in the process of building up their strength and improving communications and as such it was not expected that they would be in a position to launch a major offensive during 1959-1960. It was estimated, however, that the Chinese could deploy over a regiment plus (equivalent of a brigade plus of ours) with some tanks against LADAKH. The main sectors where operations could be expected were as under:-

- (a) DEMCHOK - CHUSHUL, with main attack on CHUSHUL with a regiment supported by tanks. (Arrow A)
- (b) Battalion group along CHANGCHEMO towards HOT SPRING and SHYOK. (Arrow B)
- (c) Battalion group on KARAKORAM route to LEH. (Arrows C, C1 and C2).
- or
- (d) Battalion group through KAURIK and SHIPKI passes. (Arrows D and E)

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6 Generally, therefore, it could be said that the Chinese would more likely limit their actions to border incidents of company and battalion strength and would hesitate to launch a bigger offensive during this period.

Deployment and tasks - own forces

7 A total build up of a brigade group with two additional J and K Militia battalions was planned by Army Headquarters. Headquarters 114 Infantry Brigade was established at LEH on 1 May, 1960, and 7 and 14 J and K Militia Battalions formed a screen by establishing a series of forward posts/plaques. The remainder of the Brigade Group, however, could not be inducted into LADAKH owing to shortage of air lift.

8 The task in general given to the Brigade was to restrict any FURTHER (capital letters used for emphasis) Chinese ingress into Indian territory along the INDO-TIBET Border in LADAKH. Along with this, the particular task given to the Brigade was to hold the general line MURGO - TSOGSTSALU - PHOBRANG - CHUSHUL - DEMCHOK and defend LEH. (See Sketch A). The screen established by 7 and 14 J and K Militia Battalions by middle of 1960 generally followed this line. (Refer to relevant portions of Army Headquarters Operation Instruction No 26 at Annexure 2, Army Headquarters Intelligence Appreciation at Annexure 3, and Western Command Operation Instruction No 26 at Annexure 4).

9 Army Headquarters also laid down that the status quo in the disputed areas should be maintained and patrolling was to be carried out to ensure that no further ingress was made. (Annexures 5 and 6). The Chinese Claim, as then known, was the 1954 Line (See Sketch B). It will be seen that, except perhaps for DEMCHOK, there was no difference between the line actually held by us and the Chinese Claim. The Chinese from PHOBRANG Northwards actually held positions well EAST of their claims. The exact positions were not known, but it could be taken to be DEHRA LA, KONGKA LA, KHURNAK Fort, and SPANGGUR. (Sketch A, Line Y). Thus there was a wide gap between the two forces and a great deal of territory claimed by the Chinese was not then occupied by either side.

Unequal race

10 In the meantime, in 1960, the Chinese had gradually consolidated and strengthened their positions. A reappraisal was, therefore, made through a war game run in Western Command in October, 1960. This brought out that a minimum of one division was required to meet the Chinese threat in LADAKH. Recommendations emerging from this war game were forwarded to Army Headquarters by Western Command, and, after some correspondence between the two Headquarters, a firm demand of a division with additional administrative troops was submitted by Western Command in September, 1961. No decision on this was given by Army Headquarters. (Relevant extracts from Western Command Exercise 'SHEEL' Annexure 7, Western Command letter No 2019/16/A/GS(Ops), dated 29 September, 1961, Annexure 8).

11 Army Headquarters, by October, 1960, issued a consolidated Intelligence Review on CHINA and TIBET, bringing

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out the total build up in TIBET and the threat to various theatres. The threat to LADAKH was estimated to be over a division including armour, and, due to the improvement in the Chinese communications, their ability to deploy against the various sectors had greatly increased. (Relevant extracts of Army Headquarters Annual Intelligence Review CHINA - TIBET 1959 - 1960 Annexure 9).

12 As against the Chinese build up of some three times to what it was in 1959, ours was negligible due to shortage of logistic support. The road to LADAKH from SRINAGAR which had started in 1959/1960 got a fresh impetus in 1960, when the Border Roads Organisation took over road construction, and, by October 1961, the road to LEH was completed. Our forward bases, such as CHUSHUL, however, still continued to be air-maintained.

SITUATION IN LADAKH IN 1961

Own deployment - September/October, 1961

13 Only one infantry battalion (1/8 GR) as against a brigade group was with difficulty inducted into LADAKH during 1961. The deployment of 114 Infantry Brigade, by October, 1961, was as under:-

- (a) Headquarters 114 Infantry Brigade in - LEH
- (b) 14 J and K Militia - KARAKORAM Sector from DAULAT BEG OLDI to SHYOK, with a company in LEH and the Battalion Headquarters at THOIS.
- (c) 1/8 GR - Middle sector from HOT SPRING to CHUSHUL, with Battalion Headquarters and two companies in CHUSHUL.
- (d) 7 J and K Militia - Southern LADAKH Sector from inclusive DUNGTI to DEMCHOK.

14 Thus, the line of our posts, in October, 1961, was generally the same as for 1960, except that it had been extended to DAULAT BEG OLDI, in the NORTH, and CHANG LA, in DUNGTI Sector, and JARA LA, in DEMCHOK Sector, in the SOUTH.

Enemy situation

15 No fresh review was carried out, but, from the Weekly Intelligence Summaries issued by Army Headquarters, it was clear that the Chinese had further consolidated their positions and opened up new tracks in the NORTH. Therefore, they were stronger in October, 1961, than in October of the previous year.

Comparative situation - Chinese and own

16 It will be seen that, by October, 1961, the situation had further been weighted in favour of the Chinese. We had

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only managed to complete the induction of one infantry battalion, and thus there were, at that time, one brigade (114 Infantry Brigade) of one regular infantry battalion and two J and K Militia battalions in LADAKH. This Brigade had no supporting arms in the shape of artillery, mortars, or MMGs. The road had barely been completed to LEH from SRINAGAR. The land routes to all posts EAST of LEH were, at best, difficult mule tracks over the high LADAKH Range.

17 All posts were maintained by air drops, except the following, where airfields had been constructed:-

- (a) LEH
- (b) CHUSHUL
- (c) FUKCHE near DUNGTI
- (d) THOIS

18 These airfields also coincided with the larger garrisons; where, upto two companies, were deployed. The other twenty-four posts were generally of platoon strength or less.

19 Thus the deployment in 1961 was essentially one of staking claims and showing the flag rather than for fighting.

20 On the other hand, the Chinese had opened up vehicular routes upto their Western-most posts (see Sketch B), and also strengthened them. Their capacity for deployment of forces, therefore, was greater than in 1960. Thus, much greater caution was required for the security of our forces at this stage than at any time previously. Instead, however, at this juncture, the 'Forward Policy' was brought into force.

SUMMARY

21 In this Section we have seen that, after the Army took over the border, the normal system of Army planning and issue of orders was undertaken at each successive level. General policy and tasks were laid down and details were left to be worked out at the appropriate levels.

22 The build up, however, because of shortage of air lift, was considerably less than planned. On the other hand, the tasks laid down were also limited to the means available.

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SECTION 12

NOVEMBER, 1961 - 20 OCTOBER, 1962

"FORWARD POLICY" DECISION

Government Decision

1 The background to the Government's decision on the "Forward Policy" is not known. Nor are the minutes of the meeting laying down the "Forward Policy" available.

2 A meeting, however, was held in the Prime Minister's office on 2 November, 1961, and was attended amongst others by the Defence Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Chief of the Army Staff, and the Director, Intelligence Bureau. It appears that the DIB was of the opinion that "the Chinese would not react to our establishing new posts and that they were NOT LIKELY TO USE FORCE AGAINST ANY OF OUR POSTS EVEN IF THEY WERE IN A POSITION TO DO SO" (in capitals for emphasis). (Army Headquarters letter No 71939/GS/MO1, dated 20 December, 1962, para 7, Annexure 10).

3 This was contrary to the military intelligence appreciation, as brought out in the CONCLUSION of Army Headquarters Annual Intelligence Review - CHINA-TIBET, 1959 - 1960 (Annexure 9); which clearly indicated that the Chinese would resist by force any attempts to take back territory held by them. What opinion was given by General Staff Branch at the meeting is, however, not known. Nevertheless, the meeting laid down three operative decisions for the implementation of the "Forward Policy". These decisions are of some significance and are, therefore, reproduced in full below:-

- "(a) So far as LADAKH is concerned, we are to patrol as far forward as possible from our present positions towards the International border. This will be done with a view to establishing our posts which should prevent the Chinese from advancing further and also dominating from any posts which they may have already established in our territory. This must be done without getting involved in a clash with the Chinese, unless this becomes necessary in self defence.
- (b) As regards UP and other Northern areas, there are not the same difficulties as in LADAKH. We should, therefore, as far as practicable, go forward and be in effective occupation of the whole frontier. Where there are any gaps, they must be covered either by patrolling or by posts.
- (c) In view of numerous operational and administrative difficulties, efforts should be made to position major concentration of forces along our borders in places conveniently situated behind the forward posts from where they could be maintained logistically and from where they can restore a border situation at short notice."

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4 The Third Decision (para 3(c) above) was obviously a prerequisite for any forward move. Without this there could be no balance in our forces and any move forward would be at the mercy of the Chinese from the start. With the meagre force then in LADAKH, there was no question of there being major bases or for that matter any base worth the name to withstand any sizeable attack, let alone to restore a situation. Thus, if the Government's decisions had to be implemented in its entirety, it could only be done after induction of a sizeable force. Western Command had already indicated that a minimum of a division was required for the effective defence of LADAKH.

Army Headquarters action

5 From 2 November, 1961, to 5 December, 1961, Army Headquarters took no action on the Government's "Forward Policy" decisions. What transpired in this period is not known, but that there was a major deviation from the Government's decisions is obvious from the directive sent out by Army Headquarters to Commands. This is reproduced in full below (Annexure 11):-

"1. The policy regarding patrolling and establishing posts with reference to INDO-TIBET Border has recently been reviewed by Government. The decisions taken by Government are reflected in the succeeding paragraphs.

LADAKH

2 We are to patrol as far forward as possible from our present positions towards the International Border as recognised by us. This will be done with a view to establishing additional posts located to prevent the Chinese from advancing further and also to dominate any Chinese posts already established in our territory.

3 This "Forward Policy" shall be carried out without getting involved in a clash with the Chinese unless it becomes necessary in self-defence.

UP and other Northern borders

4 As regards UP and other Northern areas, there are not the same difficulties as in LADAKH. We should, therefore, as far as practicable, go forward and be in effective occupation of the whole frontier. Gaps should be covered either by patrolling or by posts.

Reappraisal of tasks

5 I realise that the application of this new policy in LADAKH and on our other borders will entail considerable movements of troops with attendant logistical problems. I would like you to make a fresh appraisal of your task in view of the new directive from Government, especially with regard to the additional logistical effort involved. Your recommendations in this respect are required by me by 30 December, 1961. Meanwhile, wherever possible, action should be taken as indicated above."

6 It will be seen that Army Headquarters directive did not reflect the prerequisite for the "Forward Policy" laid down in the Government's Third Operative Decision. There was also NO question of Army Headquarters NOT knowing that such bases did NOT exist at that time. Thus on the face of it, there appeared to be a situation which is hard to reconcile. The Government who politically must have been keen to recover territory, advocated a cautious policy; whilst Army Headquarters dictated a policy that was clearly militarily unsound.

7 This, to some extent, perhaps explains Army Headquarters delay in sending out their directive. Once, however, the directive was issued, Army Headquarters pressed on with its implementation, irrespective of the difficulties brought out by lower formations.

ANALYSIS OF THE "FORWARD POLICY"

8 The policy virtually intended the establishing of posts to dominate the Chinese positions in occupied areas of LADAKH. Thus, in effect, it could mean our eventual domination of the AKSAI CHIN Highway. In fact, Army Headquarters did reflect this in a letter in which it was stated "In pursuance of recent orders from Government, it was proposed to establish certain posts in AKSAI CHIN and in other parts of LADAKH in our territory now by the Chinese". (Army Headquarters letter No 57888/TS/MO/CGS, dated 7 December, 1961, Annexure 12).

9 This Review is NOT concerned with the probability of conflict, with or without the "Forward Policy", but with its introduction the chances of a conflict certainly increased. It is obvious that politically the "Forward Policy" was desirable and presumably the eviction of the Chinese from LADAKH must always be the eventual aim. For this, there can be no argument, but what is pertinent is whether we were militarily in a position at that time to implement this policy.

10 That this implementation would bring about a major change in the military situation was obvious, and it cannot be viewed now "as being wise after the event". Yet, no operational or intelligence appreciation was given out by Army Headquarters nor fresh operation orders or instruction issued to Commands. This, together with the fact that the Third Operative Decision of the Government was not conveyed to Commands, literally meant that they had to take Army Headquarters directive at its face value. Thus troops, only to man the additional posts, were asked for by Western Command. (Western Command letter No 2005/10/C/GS(Ops), dated 29 December, 1961, Annexure 13). Had the whole of the Government directive been conveyed to the Commands, it is almost certain that Western Command would have brought out their inability to implement the "Forward Policy" till an infantry division as asked for by them had been inducted into LADAKH. There is, therefore, no doubt that the implementation of the "Forward Policy", in the manner it was done, was carried out deliberately by Army Headquarters without the necessary backing, as laid down by the Government.

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DEVELOPMENTS AFTER INTRODUCTION OF THE "FORWARD POLICY"

Probe forward

11 It has already been brought out that, with the "Forward Policy" directive, no overall instructions were issued from Army Headquarters. Indeed, no overall plan for the probe forward was given out at any stage. Instead, however, a series of orders, both written and verbal, the latter, some direct to corps, were given out, from time to time, by Army Headquarters.

12 The probe Eastwards from our bases can be conveniently divided into groups as under:- (Sketch C)

- (a) Based on DAULAT BEG OLDI along CHIP CHAP River. (Sketch C - P1)
- (b) Based on SULTAN CHUSHKU along UNCHARTERED River towards SUMDO. (Sketch C - P2)
- (c) Along GALWAN River towards SAMZUNGLING. (Sketch C - P3)
- (d) Based on PHOBRANG across THRATSANGLA towards NYINGRI. (Sketch C - P4)
- (e) Based on CHUSHUL to -
 - (i) Area CHARTSE }
 - (ii) YULA }
 - (iii) RAZANGLA }(Sketch C - P5)
- (f) Based on KOYUL to -
CHANGLA (Sketch C - P6)
- (g) Based on DEMCHOK to -
 - (i) JARA LA }
 - (ii) CHARDINGLA }(Sketch C - P7)

13 A short account of each of these probes from the time of their initiation is given in the ensuing paragraphs.

14 Probe based on DAULAT BEG OLDI (Sketch C)

- (a) Reconnaissance with a view to establishing a post was ordered vide Army Headquarters letter No 15458/1/H/TS/MO3 of 9 November, 1961. (Annexure 14, paragraphs 1, 2 and 3).
- (b) Reconnaissance and establishment of posts was carried out during April/May, 1962. Supplementary posts were also established in the area.
- (c) The first Chinese reaction was on 22 April, 1962, when one of the observation posts was threatened and had to withdraw. Later, the Chinese established three posts in that area.

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15 Based on SULTAN CHUSHKU (Sketch C)

- (a) Reconnaissance with a view to establishing a post at the head of UNCHARTERED River was ordered vide Army Headquarters letter No 15458/1/H/TS/MO3 of 10 April, 1962. (Annexure 15, paragraph 3).
- (b) Patrol sent during April, 1962, reached the vicinity of Chinese post at SUMDO. Army Headquarters, vide their signal No 162452/MO3, dated 23 April, ordered a post to be established by the patrol in the area reached.

16 GALWAN River probe (Sketch C)

- (a) Reconnaissance with a view to establishing posts was ordered vide Army Headquarters letter No 15458/1/H/TS/MO3 of 9 November, 1961. (Annexure 14).
- (b) Reconnaissance along the River approach was attempted in winter, but was not successful.
- (c) General Staff Branch Army Headquarters ordered a reconnaissance via HOT SPRING, vide their letter No 15458/1/H/TS/MO3 of 10 April, 1962. (Annexure 15, paragraph 4).
- (d) Western Command, vide their No 2005/10/R/GS(OPS) dated 18 May, 1962 (Annexure 16, paragraph 3) informed General Staff Branch Army Headquarters that, in view of the possible Chinese reactions, NO post should be established near SAMZUNGLING (GALWAN River).
- (e) Army Headquarters overruled Western Command recommendation vide their No 15458/1/H/TS/MO3 of 28 May, 1962. (Annexure 17).
- (f) This post was then established on 5 July, 1962, and subsequently brought up to approximately a platoon strength. It was surrounded by some 70 Chinese on 10 July, 1962, and gradually they increased their strength to a battalion.
- (g) Western Command, vide their signal No 02067 of 14 July, 1962, (Annexure 18) recommended that land route to GALWAN Post should not be used, as that might result in an armed clash, and asked for air maintenance.
- (h) Army Headquarters directed, vide their signal No 160341/OPS ROOM of 14 July, 1962 (Annexure 19), that maintenance will be carried out by land route.
- (i) Land columns were sent between 15 - 18 July, 1962, but were intercepted and prevented by the Chinese from reaching the post.

17 Based on PHOBRANG (Sketch C)

- (a) In June, 1962, the Chief of the Army Staff, whilst on tour in XV Corps, approved of the establishment

of the following posts:-

- (1) ANELA
- (11) THRATSANGLA (Subsequently moved further EAST, as THRATSANGLA was not found suitable).

(b) Both these posts were established by the end of June.

18 Based on CHUSHUL (Sketch C)

(a) Army Headquarters directed that a post be established at REZENGLA (Letter No 15458/1/H/TS/A/M03 of 7 December, 1961 - Annexure 20). Subsequently, on 14 December, 1961, Chief of the Army Staff, whilst on tour of XV Corps, ordered a section post to be established at REZENGLA. This post was established on 15 February, 1962.

(b) Various other posts were established around CHUSHUL - some under orders of General Staff Branch Army Headquarters - others to fill the vacuum, in pursuance of the "Forward Policy". Thus by June/July CHUSHUL had around it the following main posts:-

(1) SIRIJAP (NORTH of Lake PANGONG).

(11) YULA 1 and 2.

19 Based on KOYUL (Sketch C)

CHANGLA was ordered to be established by Army Headquarters vide their letter No 15458/1/H/TS/A/M03 of 7 December, 1961 - Annexure 20. This post of some 12 men was established in December, 1961.

20 Based on DEMCHOK (Sketch C)

A number of minor posts were established around DEMCHOK, pushing forward the line of actual control.

Line held by the end of July, 1962 (Sketch C)

21 By the end of July, 1962, we had, in the NORTH, moved forward fairly deep, and, in the central sector around CHUSHUL, gone upto the vicinity of the Chinese posts. In the SOUTH, we had established posts at REZENGLA, CHANGLA, and around DEMCHOK upto the International Border.

22 These new posts, some thirty-six in number, obviously further dispersed our meagre resources and depleted our strength in the vital bases. Thus, whereas we needed added strength at our bases to back up the new posts, we now had weakness.

Chinese reactions

23 This probe forward also activated the Chinese. With their much greater resources and easier communications, they set up stronger posts adjacent to ours, and, in many cases, virtually surrounded our posts.

24 The two sides were now within striking distance of each other. This race for establishing posts by both sides also

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brought about a mounting tension and a state of flux. A number of firing incidents took place that indicated the increased tension and the Chinese determination to resist by force our attempts to probe forward. A resume of some of the more notable incidents and developments is given below:-

- (a) July 15 - 27 - Land route party prevented by the Chinese from proceeding to the GALWAN Post.
- (b) July 20 - Firing on our SIRIJAP Post, after the Chinese had established a post 800 yards from it.
- (c) July 21 - Chinese fired on our patrol, which went from the main SIRIJAP Post to establish a second post.
- (d) July 21 - One of our patrols in the DAULAT BEG OLDI Sector fired upon by the Chinese using mortars, LMG, and rifles.
- (e) July 22 - General Staff Branch Army Headquarters gave the discretion to all post commanders to fire on the Chinese, if their posts were threatened.

25 Thus, by the end of July, 1962, tension had reached a pitch where a small incident could spark off widespread hostilities. It would, therefore, be appropriate to take stock of the military situation then prevailing.

SITUATION - AUGUST - SEPTEMBER 1962

26 114 Infantry Brigade had been augmented by one additional infantry battalion and the Brigade's deployment in August 1962 was as under:- (Sketch D)

| <u>Troops</u> | <u>Locations</u> |
|--------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| (a) Headquarters 114 Infantry Brigade | - LEH |
| (b) 5 JAT less one company | - Area PHOBRANG - HOT SPRING. |
| (c) One company 5 JAT | - Area DAULAT BEG OLDI. |
| (d) 1/8 GR with under command one platoon MMG | - Area CHUSHUL. |
| (e) 7 J and K Militia | - Area KOYUL - DEMCHOK |
| (f) 14 J and K Militia | - Area SHYOK - DAULAT BEG OLDI |

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27 The above deployment gives an impression of concentrations of a company or even more at the main focal centres. In reality the position was different. With the probe forward the total posts that had come into existence were in the region of 60. A few of these were perhaps upto platoon strength, the remainder were perforce section and below. Even with these very weak posts they had absorbed more than half the garrison strength in LADAKH. Thus, the bases were no more than administrative centres with few troops. CHUSHUL with a battalion had the largest single concentration, yet it had no more than a battalion headquarters and two weak rifle companies for the protection of the Airfield, other installations, and the base. 114 Infantry Brigade had no guns nor heavy mortars and had only one platoon of MMG.

WESTERN COMMAND REAPPRAISAL

General basis.

28 Our weakness on the ground and the developments in July 1962 were a cause of considerable concern to Western Command. They, therefore, submitted to General Staff Branch Army Headquarters a "Reappraisal of the situation in LADAKH as on August 15, 1962" (Western Command letter No 2019/1/A/GS(OPS) of 17 August 1962 - Annexure 21).

29 The reappraisal is an important document, as it sets forth realistically the situation then obtaining, and gave recommendations, both short and long term, to meet it. The reappraisal is reproduced in full in Annexure 21 and the more important aspects are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

Comparative strengths.

30 The Chinese had a well equipped division with supporting arms deployed against LADAKH. Further, the Chinese had developed roads to all the important areas they held and thus could concentrate large forces at any given place. As against this, we were thinly spread-out, with no supporting arms worth the name and with poor communications between the various sectors. Thus, in case of hostilities, we would be defeated in detail.

31 The comparative strengths, sector-wise, are given below:-

(a) DAULAT BEG OLDI Sector

A regimental group against our thinly spread-out three companies over a frontage of some 60 miles.

(b) CHANG CHENMO (HOT SPRING) Sector including GALWAN Area

Here again the Chinese had a regimental group against three companies deployed over a frontage of 30 miles.

(c) CHUSHUL Sector

An estimated regimental group, which could be further easily reinforced. Against this we had one battalion.

(d) The INDUS Valley Sector (DEMCHOK - DUNGTI)

A major threat was not visualised, but the Chinese could deploy a battalion group.

Recommendations

32 The reappraisal went on to stress the gravity of the situation brought about by our policy of "Show the Flag" and asked for a decision at the highest level for future action. The relevant paragraph is ominous and is reproduced below:-

"In view of the foregoing, it is imperative that political direction is based on military means. If the two are not co-related, there is a danger of creating a situation where we may lose both in the material and moral sense much more than we already have. Thus, there is no short cut to military preparedness to enable us to pursue effectively our present policy aimed at refuting the illegal Chinese claim over our territory."

33 The long and short term troop requirements to meet the commitments are given below:-

(a) Long term

A four brigade division, with adequate supporting arms and administrative cover.

(b) Short term

Till such time as the long term arrangements were completed, the following additional troops to be immediately inducted into LADAKH:-

(i) Four infantry battalions.

(ii) One mountain regiment

(iii) Two companies MMG

34 The reappraisal finally went on to recommend the courses of action to be taken till such time as the strength was adequately made up. These, in main, were as under:-

- (a) As the prevailing military situation in LADAKH was unfavourable, it was vital that we did not provoke the Chinese into an armed clash.
- (b) Until such time as our strength in LADAKH was built up, compatible with the Chinese, the "Forward Policy" should be held in abeyance.
- (c) A satisfactory political solution for the surrounded GALWAN Post should be sought. (Annexure 21, paragraphs 24, 28 and 31).

Army Headquarters reactions

35 It is not known whether this important document or the contents of it were conveyed to the Government. There was, however, a meeting on 24 August 1962 at which the Chief of the Army Staff, the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Western Command, and the Chief of the General Staff discussed the various points raised. No minutes of the meeting were issued.

but a letter of 5 September 1962 from General Staff Branch Army Headquarters to Western Command brings out the stand taken by Army Headquarters.

36 The letter gives the impression that General Staff Branch Army Headquarters did not consider it likely that the Chinese would resort to any large scale hostilities in LADAKH. They also sidetracked the main issues, and argued on the correctness of the "Forward Policy" and ironically enough contended that subsequent events had justified the policy adopted.

37 The immediate requirement for extra troops was not touched upon and the long term requirement was brushed aside, quoting that Western Command themselves could not accept extra troops in LADAKH. The reason for Western Command not being able to accept extra forces was availability of airlift and this was a precondition made by Western Command before extra troops could be inducted. General Staff Branch Army Headquarters, however, considered that, owing to shortage of foreign exchange, it was unlikely that Government would consider increasing the air fleet. (Army Headquarters Letter No 15458/1/H/TS/MO3, dated 5 September, 1962 - Annexure 22).

38 General Staff Branch Army Headquarters not taking note of the warning of Western Command could only be attributed to an incorrect assessment of Chinese reactions, together with a sense of complacency that nothing would happen. This is also borne out by the remark of the Deputy Chief of the General Staff (Officiating Chief of the General Staff) to Lieutenant-General L.P. SEN, DSO in September 1962 that "experience in LADAKH had shown that a few rounds fired at the Chinese would cause them to run away". (Report of Lieutenant-General L.P. SEN, DSO - Appendix A, paragraph 6).

39 Whatever the reasons, General Staff Branch Army Headquarters took little action on Western Command's recommendations, either to strengthen LADAKH or, alternatively, to lessen the tension there. On 20 September, 1962, Army Headquarters ordered that no further surrounding of posts by the Chinese or occupying of dropping zones would be tolerated. (Army Headquarters signal No 16250/MO3 of 20 September 1962 - Annexure 23).

SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

Government decision for eviction of Chinese from NEFA

40 In the meantime, tension was building up in NEFA as well. DHOLA Post had been surrounded on 8 September, 1962 and a number of firing incidents had taken place.

41 The Defence Minister held a meeting on 22 September 1962 and the border situation was reviewed. The Chief of the Army Staff considered that any action by us in DHOLA Area may well result in the Chinese retaliating in LADAKH, especially along the UNCHARTERED River and the GALWAN River. The Foreign Secretary, however, was of the opinion that the Chinese would not react very strongly against us in LADAKH. He considered that operations for eviction of the Chinese from NEFA should be carried out, even at the expense of losing some territory in LADAKH.

42 Defence Ministry then, on the request of the Chief of the Army Staff, issued the following instructions:-

"The decision throughout has been, as discussed at previous meetings, that the Army should prepare and throw the Chinese out, as soon as possible. The Chief of the Army Staff was accordingly directed to take action for the eviction of the Chinese from the KAMENG Frontier Division in NEFA, as soon as he is ready". (Annexure 24).

43 It is noteworthy that the Government accepted some loss of territory in LADAKH, but left the preparation and timing for the NEFA Operations to General Staff Branch Army Headquarters. The NEFA Operations will be dealt with under Eastern Command, but it is obvious that operations in the two theatres were closely co-related. It was, therefore, incumbent on Army Headquarters to not only ensure the preparations in NEFA but also in LADAKH to meet the Chinese threat. When both these were properly completed, then and then only should any operations have been undertaken.

44 In LADAKH the Army was not even prepared to meet a limited operation was brought out by Western Command. Minor loss of territory is one thing, but it is the responsibility of General Staff Branch Army Headquarters to ensure that the strength, deployment, and poise of the Army is adequate for its security and its task. NO Army should be placed at the mercy of the enemy on the off-chance that the latter would NOT react.

Army Headquarters actions

45 It was essential for General Staff Branch Army Headquarters at this stage to carry out a major appraisal of the border situation and on the preparation and timing for the operations. They should not have allowed themselves to be hustled into ill-prepared operations that could only lead to disaster.

46 As far as Western Command is concerned the only action taken by General Staff Branch Army Headquarters was to warn them of the impending operations in NEFA and the possibility of limited reactions in LADAKH. (Army Headquarters signal No 180395/OPS ROOM of 22 September 1962 - Annexure 25). The operative paragraphs of the signal for Western Command are given below:-

"for GOC-in-C Western Command and GOC XV Corps (.) the above action (the evicting of Chinese from NEFA) is likely to have repercussions in LADAKH to the extent that Chinese may attack some of our forward posts (.) all posts will therefore be alerted and their defences strengthened as far as possible (.) if attacked posts will fight it out and inflict maximum casualties on the Chinese (.) any adjustments which may be considered necessary to strengthen our present positions may be carried out."

47 The point of significance in the signal was the strengthening of our positions and posts and the posts to fight it out. This sounds peculiar in view of the fact that Western Command had been asking, with little success, since 1960, for extra troops and the necessary airlift and logistical backing. The strengthening, therefore, could amount to very little. Further, the orders to "fight it out" to these far-flung, tactically unsound and uncoordinated small posts brings out vividly how

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unrealistic these orders were. It is orders such as these that were issued; time and again, that brings doubt to one's mind whether General Staff Branch Army Headquarters were in touch with the realities of the situation. It appears that events controlled actions rather than actions events.

SUMMARY

48 In this Section we have seen the introduction of the "Forward Policy" without the means to implement it effectively. It was dependent more on the lack of Chinese reactions than on our strength.

49 Normal planning, detailed staff work and coordination, prerequisites of proper military functioning, posture, and balance were progressively abandoned by General Staff Branch Army Headquarters. It is more a question of acting on whims and suppositions and then plugging holes rather than on deliberate military thought followed by planned actions. This had repercussions all down the line with the result that our forces were ill-prepared to meet any military situation. The actions fought in LADAKH subsequently and the resistance put up by our troops there speaks highly of the initiative of Western Command and the fighting ability of the field formations and troops.

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SECTION 4

CONCLUSION

GENERAL

1. The Review of Western Command was undertaken as the "Forward Policy" was primarily introduced to balk the Chinese claims in LADAKH. Had the developments stemming out of it been correctly appraised by the General Staff at Army Headquarters and correlated to NEFA; it is possible that we would NOT have precipitated matters till we were better prepared in both theatres.

2. As it was, we acted on a militarily unsound basis of not relying on our own strength but rather on believed lack of reaction from the Chinese. We forgot the age old dictum of the "Art of War" summed up so aptly by Field Marshal Lord ROBERTS - "The art of war teaches us to rely not on the likelihood of the enemy NOT coming, but on our own readiness to receive him; not on the chance of his not attacking, but rather on the fact that we have made our position unassailable".

3. Militarily, it is unthinkable that the General Staff did not advise the Government on our weakness and inability to implement the "Forward Policy". General KAUL in his report (Appendix paras 65-69) has brought out that, on a number of occasions in 1961-62, the Government were advised of our deficiencies in equipment, manpower, and logistic support, which would seriously prejudice our position in the event of a Chinese attack on us. The fact, however, remains that orders were given by the General Staff in December 1961 for the implementation of the "Forward Policy" without the prerequisite of "Major Bases" for restoring a military situation, as laid down by Government. Indeed General KAUL as CGS and the JMO, time and again, ordered in furtherance of the "Forward Policy" the establishment of individual posts, overruling protests made by Western Command.

4. There might have been pressure put on by the Defence Ministry, but it was the duty of the General Staff to have pointed out the unsoundness of the "Forward Policy" without the means to implement it. This was brought out very forcibly by GOC-in-C Western Command in his letter of 17 August 1962 (Annexure 21). Apparently, however, the General Staff at NO stage submitted to the Government an appraisal on the consequences of the "Forward Policy" or the basic requirement of troops and resources required before it should have been implemented.

5. General KAUL in his report goes on to state that in a number of meetings held by the Defence Minister and attended by GOAS, himself as CGS, DIB and representatives of Defence, External Affairs, and Home Ministries, the general view was that the Chinese would not provoke a show-down. (Appendix para 70). This is strange, because military action emerges

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from both political and military appreciations. It was clear from 1960 onwards that CHINA had greatly increased her forces in TIBET. A strength far greater than that required for defence or quelling of Tibetan uprising. This was brought out in October 1960 in the Military Intelligence Review 1959-60.

6 To base military actions and plans in jeopardy the security of troops on suppositions and beliefs put across at conference tables indicates either acceptance of the belief or a militarily immature mind. The General Staff, particularly the CGS, Deputy CGS, and the DMO went a step further and permeated this belief into the Army, with the disastrous result that even field formations were infected with a sense of complacency. This stemmed from the fact that after 1960 planning and detailed staff work so essential for "Higher Direction of War" was never seriously undertaken.

STAFF DUTIES

7 Where there are so many intangibles, as in war, it is essential that all facets of a problem are thoroughly examined before a course of action is determined. The higher the level the greater the necessity for a thorough examination. This process of higher levels must be carried out in writing as the wide range of examination cannot obviously be covered mentally or verbally. Thus, in modern times, staff has increased as the complexities of war increased, and a system of staff duties have evolved which ensures a thorough appraisal and systematic planning before a course of action is adopted.

8 The detailed staff work that was carried out before the NORMANDY Operations is common knowledge. Our staff at Army Headquarters is patterned on the War Office in the UNITED KINGDOM. Our General Staff with its Operations, Intelligence, and Staff Duties Directorate is designed for such detailed staff work.

9 In fact, till 1960 one can see systematic planning being carried out at all levels. Intelligence and operational appreciations were made and plans evolved, in which the tasks laid down were compatible with the resources available. The plans were then tried out through war games and it was hoped that the flaws discovered would be put right. This as has been seen was not done. In 1961-62, major developments took place that required fresh appraisal at each stage. These were as under:-

- (a) The Chinese build up in TIBET by end of 1960 had substantially increased and was brought out in the Military Intelligence Review 1959-60. This required a fresh reappraisal of our forces and tasks.
- (b) The introduction of the "Forward Policy" end of 1961. Before its introduction it was essential

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that an appreciation should have been prepared bringing out the requirements of troops and resources and also possible Chinese reactions.

- (c) The incidents in August/September 1962 including the surrounding of the GALWAN Post in LADAKH and the DHOLA Post in NEFA showed clearly the mounting tension and a possibility of an armed clash. Western Command had brought out in August 1962 in no uncertain manner the dangerous situation that had developed. This again required a fresh appraisal for the steps to be taken to meet the overall situation.
- (d) At the outbreak of hostilities if a coordinated plan had been made to meet the Chinese offensive our troops would perhaps have been more balanced and there would NOT have been any question of plugging holes at the last moment.

10 It is apparent that none of this planning took place and NO operation orders or instructions were issued by the General Staff. It was therefore NOT possible for Command or lower formations to issue any comprehensive order without a directive from the General Staff. All that could be done by Western Command to meet the situation, when the hostilities broke out, was done. Troops and equipment were depleted from formations facing PAKISTAN to reinforce LADAKH.

11 This lapse in Staff Duties on the part of the Chief of the General Staff, his Deputy, the DMO, DMI, and other Staff Directors is inexcusable. From this stemmed the unpreparedness and the unbalance of our forces. These appointments in General Staff are key appointments and officers were hand-picked by General KAUL to fill them. There was therefore no question of any clash of personalities. General Staff appointments are stepping stones to high command and correspondingly carry heavy responsibility. When, however, these appointments are looked upon as adjuncts to a successful career and the responsibility is not taken seriously, the results, as is only too clear, are disastrous. This should never be allowed to be repeated and the staff as of old must be made to bear the consequences for their lapses and mistakes. Comparatively the mistakes and lapses of the staff sitting in DELHI without the stress and strain of battle are more heinous than the errors made by commanders in the field of battle.

COURSE OF OPERATIONS

12 The unmilitary poise of our forces in LADAKH has already been too clearly brought out and needs no further elaboration. How they came to be so placed has also been examined in detail. For this the responsibility lies in the "Higher Direction of War".

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13 The Chinese employed perhaps a minimum of a division plus a regiment in LADAKH and, by concentrating the requisite forces against our various outposts, liquidated them, in turn. The Chinese perhaps deployed their forces as under:-

- (a) One regiment plus - DAULAT BEG OLDI and HOT SPRING Sector,
- (b) Division less a regiment - CHUSHUL Sector,
- (c) Regiment minus - INDUS Valley Sector (Demchok - DUNGTI).

14 As against this, by 10 November, we had approximately a division worth of infantry but only a small proportion of supporting arms. But where our main disadvantage lay was that, except for the new inductions, which reinforced CHUSHUL and DUNGTI defences, the remainder of our troops were dispersed in penny-packets in outposts along the entire LADAKH Border. Each Sector was isolated from the other and, within the Sector, there were NO reserves to influence the battle. Except in the later stages in CHUSHUL and DUNGTI, there was NO such thing as a close coordinated defence.

15 Thus the battle in the main was individual posts 'fighting it out' and, once overrun, the survivors trickled back to a focal point in each Sector. Efforts were made to organise defences at these focal points, but, by then, there was neither the strength nor the time to carry it out; and the only recourse was a withdrawal to the rear.

16 It was a junior leaders and jawans battle and there is no doubt that they acquitted themselves well. They fought under grave handicap and in face of defeat; yet there was no sign of undue panic and never a rout. The main reason for this was that troops fought under commanders they knew and trusted. There was no interference or short-circuiting in the chain of command and commanders on the spot were given freedom of action. The good name of our Army was NOT completely marred in LADAKH and the grave errors committed by the General Staff to an extent mitigated; thanks to the fighting ability of our troops. We must, however, ensure that never again should our troops be placed in such jeopardy.

LESSONS

Defence of LADAKH

17 In LADAKH militarily we will always remain at a disadvantage compared to the Chinese. Our roads even when fully developed will not have the capacity to sustain major operations. The road to LADAKH is snow-bound in the winter and crosses several mountain ranges varying in heights from 8000 - 13500 feet and is over 700 miles in length.

18 In LADAKH itself our manoeuvrability is restricted to CHUSHUL and INDUS Valley Sectors. Accessibility to DAULAT BEG OLDI and HOT SPRING Sectors in the KARAKORAM Mountains will always be difficult.

19 The Chinese, on the other hand, have no doubt difficult country to traverse coming up to the Tibetan plateau. Once there, however, all Sectors are easily accessible from their side. Thus their capacity for manoeuvre is much greater than ours.

20 Logistical air support can help, but it is clear that it should only be treated as an additional form of support and not the main. This will be more clearly brought out from NEFA Operations.

21 The retaking of our territory in LADAKH or holding the territory we have in our possession is no doubt a prize of some value. But it would be wishful thinking that fighting in LADAKH would not spread to other theatres. Thus for success we should look to other theatres where we are militarily at par if not at an advantage. In LADAKH we should limit our commitments in view to the holding of LADAKH Range at the few focal points that give access to LSH.

22 Cold war positions meant for policing should NOT be the basis of our defences in an actual conflict. Plans should be made to withdraw these outposts to major defences at focal points, as indicated in the previous paragraph.

23 The focal points should be held by at least a brigade group and the defences should be fully coordinated with adequate artillery support to break up mass attacks of the Chinese. Reserves should be available to reinforce a threatened Sector or clear the enemy who may have infiltrated to the rear.

Training and equipment

24 Our basic training proved adequate and stood the test of battle. But our officers and men were unfamiliar with Chinese tactics, their weapons, equipment, and capabilities. No directive on warfare against the Chinese had been issued by General Staff Army Headquarters. Confidence in troops can only come when they have full knowledge of the capabilities and limitations of the enemy. The unknown begets fear.

25 There were comparatively few troops employed and hence shortages in equipment were made up by Western Command through milking other units in the Command. Our equipment, however, needs to be suitably modified for the intense cold of LADAKH.

26 Equipment, clothing, and rations will be dealt with under general lessons from both theatres.

Logistic support

27 The machinery for the allotment of logistic support, particularly air, needs thorough overhauling. Targets were given by Army Headquarters, but these were never met. There was either shortage of aircraft or supply dropping equipment (parachutes). Induction of troops and stocking was always behind schedule. It is essential that accurate forecast be made of the logistical support that will be available so that formations can plan realistically and meet their commitments adequately. Inflated figures for planning only mean hardship to the troops later.

SECTION 1

AUGUST 1959 - NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1959Background

1 On 26 August 1959, the Chinese overran our post in LONGJU (see Sketch B) and thus, for the first time, since their occupation of TIBET, militarily upset the status quo on the INDO-TIBET Border. The whole Border, after this incident, was placed under the control of the Army.

2 Unlike LADAKH, NEFA had been gradually opened up by the NEFA Administration assisted by ASSAM Rifles. There was, therefore, semblance of authority and control in most areas of NEFA. Militarily, however, it was still a closed book; and thus the immediate requirement was for the induction of some force to act as a firm base for further build up.

3 A special operation instruction was issued by Army Headquarters on 1 September, 1959, to Eastern Command. This gave the "Intention" as one to establish our rights of possession on our side of the McMAHON Line and to prevent infiltration. It also allotted to Eastern Command 116 Infantry Brigade for this purpose, together with the command of the ASSAM Rifles operational platoons in NEFA. Eastern Command, in their turn, on 7 September 1959, gave more detailed instructions in their Operation Instruction No 5, dated 7 September 1959, to 116 Infantry Brigade. The important points were the same as in Army Headquarters Special Instruction of 1 September 1959.

4 A meeting was held in SHILLONG on 13 September 1959, where the Chief of the Army Staff presided and, amongst others, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, and the Inspector General of ASSAM Rifles were present. The minutes gave out the general policy to be followed, which was as under:-

- (a) No new posts were to be established on the McMAHON Line, neither were the existing posts expected to stay and fight, in the event of a Chinese attack.
- (b) The existing posts on the border should be of platoon strength, so that they could extricate themselves tactically, if necessary. It was also agreed that the tasks of these posts were to act as -
 - (i) symbols of authority;
 - (ii) outposts to pass back information of the Chinese activities.
- (c) These forward posts should, in the event of an attack, fall back on firm bases, from where they could go on the offensive. The location of the firm bases was to be decided later.

5 In November 1959, Army Headquarters laid down the policy to be followed by our forces vis-a-vis the Chinese on the INDO-TIBET Border. This stressed that the status quo that existed should be maintained and provocative action avoided. (Army Headquarters letter No 57018/A/GS/M01 dated 11 November 1959 - Annexure 26).

6 The above two directions are important, as they formed the basis of the policy to be followed, till the introduction of the "Forward Policy".

7 A paper on the defence of NEFA by the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, written in October 1959, recommended the "Defence Line" based on a series of firm bases. Army Headquarters Intelligence Appreciation was issued about the same time bringing out the Chinese threat. Based on these two, Army Headquarters issued Operation Instruction No 25 to Eastern Command on 29 January 1960. This Instruction, again, as was the case with Operation Instruction No 26 to Western Command, was current at the outbreak of hostilities and is, therefore, important and relevant to the operations.

SALIENT POINTS FROM OPERATION INSTRUCTION NO 25 (ANNEXURE 27)

Chinese threat

8 It was considered that the Chinese in 1960 would not be in a position to launch a major offensive. They were engaged in consolidating their hold over TIBET and opening up communications.

9 In case of hostilities, however, the threat that could be posed in the Eastern Theatre was as under:-

- (a) SIKKIM - BHUTAN - One division
- (b) NEFA
 - (1) Western NEFA - Upto two regiments,
 - (11) Eastern NEFA - One regiment,

Own forces

10 XXIII Corps had been formed with Headquarters at SHILLONG to look after the following:-

- (a) SIKKIM - BHUTAN
- (b) NEFA
- (c) ASSAM - EAST PAKISTAN Border
- (d) NAGALAND

11 Troops placed under XXIII Corps with their tasks were as under:-

- 4 Infantry Division - NEFA

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23 Infantry Division - HAGALAND
181 Infantry Brigade - ASSAM
68 Infantry Brigade - SIKKIM

Tasks pertaining to NEFA

12 The overall task was to defend our territory against Chinese aggression.

13 This was to be carried out by having border outposts to control routes of entry into NEFA, backed up by strong bases in depth along the "Defence Line" from WEST to EAST as under:-

TOWANG - BOMBILA - ZIRO - DOPORIJO - ELONG - RONG

TEJU - LOHITPUR - HAYULIANG.

14 In addition, security of a number of vulnerable points was to be ensured. These were in main, focal points, immediately in depth of the border outposts and were as under (Sketch E):-

| | | |
|-------------|---|-----------------------------|
| TOWANG | } | KAMENG Frontier Division. |
| BAMENG | | |
| KHANEN | | |
| LIMEKING | | SUBANSRI Frontier Division. |
| MECHUKA | } | SIANG Frontier Division. |
| TUTING | | |
| ANINI | } | LOHIT Frontier Division. |
| MATENGLIANG | | |
| GOLLIANG | | |
| WALONG | | |
| HAYULIANG | | |

15 It will be seen that a three-tier system of defence was visualised in NEFA.

16 The forward most tier consisted of border outposts acting as symbols of authority and controlling routes of entry. These border outposts were not meant to fight, but to delay and fall back to firm bases in the rear.

17 In the middle tier were the vulnerable points on which the border outposts were dependent and to which they would fall back, when attacked. These vulnerable points were sufficiently in depth so as to increase the logistic problems of the Chinese.

18 The last tier was the "Defence Line", where the main battle would be fought and from where offensive action would be launched, depending upon the situation. The "Defence Line" was sited so that the Chinese would be at a logistical disadvantage and thus would be caught off balance.

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EXERCISE LAL QILA

19 In order to check the efficacy of Operation Instruction No 25, Army Headquarters ran Exercise LAL QILA at LUCKNOW in April 1960. This brought out that the minimum requirement for NEFA in 1960 was one division of four infantry brigades, as against a division of three infantry brigades then deployed.

20 Headquarters Eastern Command asked for the extra troops, but also indicated that, till such time as these materialised, they planned to utilise upto a brigade from NAGALAND for NEFA, if so required. (HQ Eastern Command letter No 120901/22/9/ GS(OPS) dated 26 July 1960 - Annexure 28).

21 Extra troops for NEFA, however, never materialised. On the other hand, one infantry brigade (11 Infantry Brigade) from 4 Infantry Division in NEFA was diverted to NAGALAND in February 1961. This was done as a temporary measure, but, till the outbreak of hostilities in October 1962, it was still in NAGALAND.

ARMY HEADQUARTERS INTELLIGENCE REVIEW 1959-60 (ANNEXURE 9)

22 The Chinese in the meantime in 1960 had further consolidated their strength and posed a greater threat against INDIA. This was brought out by Army Headquarters in their Intelligence Review 1959-60. The increased threat envisaged against NEFA is given below (Sketch F):-

(a) General threat to NEFA

Three Chinese divisions were deployed on the periphery of NEFA.

(b) Western Sub Sector (KAMENG Frontier Division)

Two division opposition could be expected in Western Sub Sector of NEFA or the KAMENG Frontier Division.

(c) Central Sub Sector (LEH LA - TANULA)

Except between LEH LA and GELING, the remainder of this region between KAMENG Frontier Division and TANULA in LOHIT Frontier Division was relatively inaccessible. Between LEH LA and GELING battalion groups could be expected to operate over any of the seven or more tracks marked on Sketch F.

(d) Eastern Sub Sector (TAMU LA Eastward)

Main threat from RIMA upto a regimental group till such time as road to RIMA was completed. Once the road was completed, this would also become a vulnerable sub-sector of NEFA.

23 In the normal course, this increased threat would require reappraisal of plans by the operational staff at Army Headquarters and then action taken to meet the new situation, if considered necessary. It is also pertinent to bring out that, soon after the Intelligence Review was published, the Chief of the General Staff, his deputy, and his three staff directors were changed. It was, therefore, all the more necessary for

General Staff Branch at Army Headquarters to have clarified the position regarding the existing operational plans. No such action was taken.

24 Eastern Command, therefore, assumed that the new General Staff still considered the existing plans operative and did not subscribe to the threat built up by the Intelligence. In fact, in July 1961, Eastern Command revised their Operational Instruction to their lower formations, but kept the threat and their plans according to Army Headquarters Operation Instruction No 25. This revised Operation Instruction was sent to Army Headquarters and was not commented upon by them, and, as such, doubly confirmed that the threat and the plan were in consonance with their thinking.

ACTION BY EASTERN COMMAND AND XXXIII CORPS

Background

25 Eastern Command first issued Operation Instruction No 7 in November 1960. This was subsequently superseded by their Operation Instruction No 8 of 15 July 1961, but was still based on Army Headquarters Operation Instruction No 25.

26 XXXIII Corps likewise revised their Operation Instruction to 4 Infantry Division for NEFA and issued a fresh one in September 1961. Both the Command and the Corps Instructions followed the same line and are, therefore, dealt with together. These two Operation Instructions are important, as they constituted the orders that should have been followed in NEFA during the SINO-INDIAN conflict in 1962.

Eastern Command and XXXIII Corps Operation Instructions (Annexures 29 and 30 respectively)

27 Enemy threat

- (a) Both Instructions took cognisance of the Intelligence Review, but only in so far as to draw attention to organisation and locations of the Chinese forces in TIBET. The actual threat brought out was the same as given in Army Headquarters Operation Instruction No 25, that is, upto two regiments against Western NEFA and one against Eastern.
- (b) The planning at all levels, therefore, continued to be against a threat of a division, as against three divisions that the Chinese could easily bring against NEFA. This was time and again confirmed by various members of the General Staff from the Chief of the General Staff downward during their tours in NEFA during 1961-62. In fact they ridiculed as alarmist any suggestion of a greater force being brought against NEFA. The Director of Military Operations as late as August 1962 openly declared at Headquarters 4 Infantry Division that the Chinese would not react and were in no position to fight. Thus psychologically and otherwise preparations for meeting a major threat were never really undertaken.

28 Tasks

- (a) The three-tier system of defence was elaborated. The battle was to be stabilised on the "Defence Line", from where counter-offensive would be resumed.
- (b) The vulnerable points and the bases on the "Defence Line" were the same as given in Army Headquarters Operation Instruction No 25.

29 The three-tier concept of defence of NEFA was undoubtedly sound. Had it been properly implemented, there would have been no question of our troops being caught off balance. As it was, these plans were more on paper than on the ground. The required quantum of troops was never made available nor were the plans adhered to in the NEFA Operations during October/November 1962. Our troops were placed well ahead of the "Defence Line" and, there, caught off balance rather than catching the enemy off balance on the "Defence Line". How this situation came about will unfold itself as the developments in 1961 and 1962 are studied.

SITUATION IN NEFA IN 1961

30 We have seen the developments in NEFA in 1960 and the progressive build up of the Army there. 116 Infantry Brigade was replaced by 4 Infantry Division in November/December 1959 and XXIII Corps formed to look after NEFA, ASSAM, and NAGALAND. In February 1961, as has already been brought out, 11 Infantry Brigade from 4 Infantry Division was moved out to NAGALAND. Thus, in 1961, though we had elaborate defence plans, in actual fact, we were very thin on the ground. How thin we were will be seen from the actual deployments.

Outposts

31 Fifty ASSAM Rifle platoons were made available for outposts. Not all the posts were on the McMahon Line; a number of platoons were deployed in depth to look after the line of communications, to act as staging posts, and also to maintain the forward posts. Their deployment was as follows:-

(Sketch E):-

- (a) KAMENG Frontier Division - Fourteen posts.
- (b) SUBANSRI Frontier Division - Seven posts.
- (c) SIANG Frontier Division - Eight posts.
- (d) LOHIT Frontier Division - Eight posts.

32 The strength of the posts varied from one to two platoons. Thus, in effect, the border outpost line was established.

Deployment on "Vulnerable Points" and "Defence Line"

- 33 (e) 4 Infantry Division with two infantry brigades was deployed as under (Sketch D):-
 - (i) Division Headquarters - TEZPUR
 - (ii) One infantry brigade (7 Infantry Brigade) - KAMENG Frontier Division.

- (iii) One infantry brigade (5 Infantry Brigade) - Remainder of NEFA.
- (b) The detailed deployment of 7 Infantry Brigade was as follows:-
 - (i) Brigade less one battalion - TOWANG area.
 - (ii) One battalion - BONDILA.
- (c) The deployment of 5 Infantry Brigade was as follows:-
 - (i) Headquarters 5 Infantry Brigade - NORTH LAKHIMPUR.
 - (ii) One battalion - Area ZIRO - DOPORIJO in SUBANSERI Frontier Division. The Battalion less two companies was in DOPORIJO, one company at ZIRO, and one company at LIMKING.
 - (iii) One battalion - Along the BRAHMAPUTRA River (in SIANG Frontier Division). Battalion less two companies was at ALONG and two companies deployed NORTH of it at TUFING and GELING.
 - (iv) One battalion - In LOMIT Frontier Division. Battalion Headquarters and two companies at TEJU, one company at HAYULIANG, and another company at WALONG.

34 It will be seen that the Vulnerable Points in most cases had upto a company strength, which, considering the troops available, was not unsatisfactory.

35 The situation regarding the major bases on the "Defence Line" was, however, different. In TOWANG there was a brigade less a battalion. This was the largest base on the "Defence Line", but, considering the threat of two divisions that had been built up by the Chinese in this Sector, this strength could not be considered adequate. There was only a battalion at BONDILA, the other base on the "Defence Line" in Western NEFA. In Eastern NEFA, TEJU and HAYULIANG, the two bases between them, had one battalion less a company, a strength hardly adequate for the growing threat in that Sector. It is of interest to note that WALONG was not on the "Defence Line", but in the operations the main battle in Eastern NEFA was fought there.

36 Thus, as in LADAKH, so in NEFA, we were hardly in a position to adopt the "Forward Policy" with all its aggressive purport and increased requirements in troops and resources. That it was adopted by Army Headquarters, once again, proves that the "Higher Direction of War" was faulty and it was based more on

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preconceived notions of lack of reactions by Chinese than on sound military judgment.

SUMMARY

37 We have seen in this Section the methodical build up of our forces in 1959-60. The overall paucity of troops in INDIA and the lack of logistical backing in NEFA limited the number of troops that could be inducted. The plans formulated, however, took cognizance of these limitations and the tasks given to the forces were generally compatible to the resources available.

38 PUNJAB was depleted of 4 Infantry Division which was moved to NEFA. Normal military planning and staff work was undertaken and plans evolved were tried out in War Games. It was realised that even a division was not sufficient for the adequate defence of NEFA and, therefore, additional troops from MIZORAM were earmarked to be moved to NEFA, in case of emergency. It is noteworthy that all these measures in 1959-60 were based on a threat of a division plus against NEFA. Even then our posture was essentially defensive and our policy directed avoidance of provocative action.

39 The three-tier system of defence was eminently sound. The concept of the "Defence Line", though giving up ground, ensured the balance of our forces and gave a good chance of our defeating the Chinese in detail, once they moved down to it.

40 In 1961, little note was taken of the major build up of the Chinese against NEFA. On the other hand, a brigade was taken away from NEFA to MIZORAM - a process reverse to what was planned earlier. That left only the shell of the defence system, and the "Defence Line" itself had little strength.

41 It was, therefore, all the more necessary in 1961 to have acted with caution and avoided any provocative action. Instead the "Forward Policy" was introduced. LADANG may have been the main venue for its implementation, but an appreciation of its effect would have shown the resultant reaction in NEFA.

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SECTION 2

FORWARD POLICY NOVEMBER 1961 - ENCIRCLEMENT OF DHOLA POST
8 SEPTEMBER 1962

BACKGROUND

1 Section 1 of this Chapter has brought out the situation as it existed in NEFA in October 1961 and the cautious policy followed on the border vis-a-vis the Chinese. Our patrols and posts were not to be aggressive and they were at no time to cross the border. In the event of the Chinese crossing our border, they were to be TOLD to withdraw. Firing was only to be resorted to if there was imminent danger of our posts being overrun or if the Chinese initiated a fire-fight. (Annexure 26, para 2).

2 The "Forward Policy" in Eastern Command was brought into force by the Chief of the Army Staff letter No 15458/1/H/TS/M03 of 5 December (Annexure 11), which was addressed to both General Officers Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern and Western Commands. The operative paragraphs for Eastern Command were paragraphs 4 and 5. These paragraphs are reproduced below:-

(a) Paragraph 4

"As regards UP and other Northern areas, there are not the same difficulties as in LADAKH. We should, therefore, as far as practicable, go forward and be in effective occupation of the whole frontier. Gaps should be covered either by patrolling or by posts."

(b) Paragraph 5

"I realise that the application of this new policy in LADAKH and on our other borders will entail considerable movements of troops, with attendant logistical problems. I would like you to make a fresh appraisal of your task, in view of the new directive from Government, especially with regard to the additional logistical effort involved. Your recommendations in this respect are required by me by 30 December, 1961. Meanwhile, wherever possible, action should be taken as indicated above."

3 The introduction and analysis of the "Forward Policy" has already been dealt with under Chapter I, Section 2. It would, however, be useful to briefly recapitulate the Government's decisions on the introduction of this Policy. Three operative decisions were taken (Chapter 1, Section 2, para 3). The first two were reflected in Chief of the Army Staff's letter to the General Officers Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern and Western Commands (Annexure 11). The third Operative Decision, which laid down the prerequisites for the implementation of the "Forward Policy" was omitted from the letter. This, it will be recollected, stressed the forming of major concentrations of forces along our

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borders to back the forward posts and to restore any border situation at short notice.

4 It will be seen from Section 1 of this Chapter, Paras 33 to 36, that the strong bases on the "Defence Line" envisaged in Army Headquarters Operation Instruction No 25 had not materialised by the end of October 1961. Thus this omission of the pre-requisite by Army Headquarters was as grave and serious to Eastern Command as it was to Western Command. This Review having no access to Army Headquarters documents and staff is not able to assess the reasons or causes for this omission. But that the "Forward Policy" was ordered without the bases must be taken note of, as all further developments and operations were gravely affected by lack of them for restoring the situation.

RESOURCES REVIEW

General

5 The immediate requirements asked for by Eastern Command on the introduction of the "Forward Policy", as has been seen in Western Command, must be viewed keeping in mind the following:-

- (a) The Government's decision of the prerequisite of having major bases to support the "Forward Policy" was also not known to Eastern Command.
- (b) General Staff did not issue any appreciation of the likely Chinese reactions and the method by which it was to be combated.

Reappraisal

6 Eastern Command, vide their letter No 120901/22/P/GS(0) of 29 December 1961 to Army Headquarters (Annexure 31) made their reappraisal of tasks and requirements as asked for by the Chief of the Army Staff for implementing the "Forward Policy". The main points in the reappraisal as far as NEFA was concerned are given below:-

- (a) Establishment of posts well forward along the NEFA border would require additional logistic support including air support and helicopters for evacuating casualties. (Annexure 31, paras 1 to 4).
- (b) Approximately, one more battalion of ASSAM Rifles would be required for manning the forward posts.
- (c) Engineers were required for the construction of winter accommodation.
- (d) To look after approximately 650 miles of the NEFA Border, 4 Infantry Division was far too

stretched. Eastern Command, therefore, required a minimum of four brigades for 4 Infantry Division. This meant an additional brigade to the permanent complement of the three infantry brigades in 4 Infantry Division order of battle. At that time, however, 4 Infantry Division only had two brigades, as the third brigade had earlier been sent to NABALAND. Thus, in effect, two more brigades were required in NEFA.

Previous assessments for NEFA

7 It will be recollected that, after Exercise LAL QILA held in April 1960, Eastern Command assessment for NEFA, with the threat then obtaining, was for a division of four brigades. (Chapter II, Section 1, Paras 19 - 20).

8 In early 1961, Army Headquarters appointed a Border Defence Study Group led by Lt Gen LP SEN (The present General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command) to assess the requirement for border defence. The report of the Study Group was submitted to Army Headquarters and Ministry of Defence in May 1961. As far as NEFA and the Chinese threat was concerned, a number of recommendations were made, including such things as NEFA administration, Intelligence, Command set up, development of roads, logistical backing, and air support. As far as troop requirements were concerned, however, the report brought out a minimum requirement of one additional infantry division for NEFA (Annexure 32, Para 20). This recommendation, as will be seen, was made before the introduction of the "Forward Policy". The action taken on these recommendations can only be known from Army Headquarters but suffice it to say that NO fresh induction of troops took place.

9 In July 1961, General Staff reviewed their Emergency Expansion Plan, the previous one having been drawn up in 1957. A letter was sent out to Commands asking for their recommendations, in view of the changes that had taken place between 1957 and 1961. The aim of the Expansion Plan was to provide ahead in peace for such units and formations as were considered essential in an emergency, in order to sustain national war effort. (Annexure 33, Paras 1 and 4 to 7).

10 Eastern Command gave their recommendations vide their letter No 13345/G(SD), dated 14 October, 1961 (Annexure 34, Paras 1, 2, and 3). The Emergency Expansion Plan for Eastern Command was divided into two parts as under:-

(a) Part 1

Formations and units to be raised/reorganised for completing upto scale the existing field force. This included the raising of an infantry division for employment in SIKKIM, a corps headquarters to control the new division and 20 Infantry Division, which was then located in RANCHI/RANGRAH Area.

(b) Part II

Formations/units required immediately on the outbreak of hostilities to meet the Chinese threat, including their probable invasion of NEPAL and BHUTAN. Four additional divisions (excluding a division for SIKKIM) were required as follows:-

- (i) An additional infantry division for XXXIII Corps.
 - (ii) An infantry division for UTTAR PRADESH/TIBET Sector (including 9 Infantry Brigade Group).
 - (iii) An infantry division for BHUTAN.) Only in case
 - (iv) An infantry division for NEPAL.) we were
- } required to
provide aid
to these
countries.

11 Thus a total of five infantry divisions were required, one to be raised immediately, and the others in time to meet an emergency; out of the latter, one was for NEFA.

12 Army Headquarters' action/decision on Eastern Command's recommendations is not available with Headquarters Eastern Command. It is, however, amply clear that from 1960, time and again, Eastern Command went on pressing for extra troops. But till the outbreak of hostilities, NEFA continued to have only 4 Infantry Division less a brigade. It is, therefore, all the more hard to understand the General Staff's decision to increase our commitments by the "Forward Policy" rather than reduce them because of the paucity of troops.

BORDER SITUATION IN NEFA PRIOR TO "FORWARD POLICY"

13 It will be recollected that fifty ASSAM Rifles platoons were deployed on some thirty-six outposts, before the "Forward Policy" was introduced. A number of these posts were in depth, acting as staging posts, and otherwise supporting the forward posts.

14 The general situation of the forward posts in NEFA was as under:- (Sketch F)

(a) KAMENG Frontier Division (14 posts)

- (1) The ASSAM Rifles posts were deployed to look after the more important routes into the Sector. These were -
 - (aa) KHRINZAMANE axis along the NYAMJANGCHU River.
 - (bb) the BUMLA - TOWANG axis.
 - (cc) TULUNGJLA Axis along GOSHU CHU.

- (ii) It will be seen that no forward outposts were deployed WEST of KHINZAMANE to the TRI JUNCTION INDIA-BHUTAN-TIBET. This is the area where, later, the DHOLA Post was established and which, as is well known, was the focal point of subsequent operations.

(b) Remaining three frontier divisions

In these frontier divisions, some twenty-one posts were deployed; of these twelve posts were in the vicinity of the border on the better known tracks between TIBET and INDIA. These posts were located as follows:-

- (i) 4 forward posts in SUBANSRI Frontier Division.
- (ii) 6 forward posts in SIANG Frontier Division.
- (iii) 2 forward posts in LOHIT Frontier Division.

Thus, in these three frontier divisions large areas of the border were not policed. This was natural, particularly, in the WEST and NORTH WEST region of the LOHIT Frontier Division, where, because of extremely difficult terrain, our forward posts could only be located in the mid-forward areas some twenty to thirty miles short of the border.

PROBE FORWARD

Preliminary planning

15 Eastern Command

- (a) Eastern Command on 10 January 1962 issued instructions to XXXIII Corps for the planning and implementation of the "Forward Policy" in NEFA (Annexure 35). The main points from the instructions are given below:-

- (i) In the KAMENG and SUBANSRI Frontier Divisions, the existing seasonal posts to be converted into all-weather posts. Further, if any change in location of existing posts was found necessary, in view of the "Forward Policy", this was to be implemented. (Annexure 35, Para 8(a)).
- (ii) In the SIANG and LOHIT Frontier Divisions, there were fewer posts and most of these were some distance from the border. Recommendations were, therefore, required for pushing forward of old posts and opening up of new ones. (Annexure 35, Para 8(b)).

- (iii). All the additional posts that were required were to be opened by ASSAM Rifles, suitably backed by regular troops.
- (b) The working for the establishment of posts in the KAMENG and SUBANSERI Frontier Divisions and SLANG and BISHI Frontier Divisions differed. In the former, it was stated that the changes necessitated by the "Forward Policy" were to be implemented, whereas, in the latter case, recommendations were required. The notings on Headquarters Eastern Command File No. 120901/32/P/CS(1) - Volume II - minutes 13 to 15 (Annexure 35), however, bring out that, in the KAMENG and SUBANSERI Frontier Divisions, there were "already sufficient forward posts to effectively guard our border". Thus, presumably, only minor changes were required. In the other two frontier divisions, "detailed examination was required, hence presumably the asking for recommendations."
- (c) The establishing of these posts may be a side issue, as far as the causes that led to the reverses in NEFA are concerned, but, in the KAMENG Frontier Division, this led to the opening of the DHOLA Post and is, therefore, most pertinent.

15

XXIII Corps

- (a) XXIII Corps, on 24 February 1962, recommended the opening of nine posts (Annexure 37) in addition to the twenty-four which were, in the meantime, ordered by Army Headquarters on 25 January 1962. (Annexure 38). These nine posts included a post at the TRI JUNCTION of TIBET-BHUTAN and the KAMENG Frontier Division of INDIA. (This was the old TRI JUNCTION, as shown in maps in use before 1962 and did not follow the watershed principle).
- (b) Orders were issued by XXIII Corps for the establishment of the twenty-four posts, as given by Army Headquarters. The remaining posts, including the TRI JUNCTION, which, later, led to the establishment of the DHOLA Post, were not till then ordered. It will be noted from paragraph 15(a)(i) above that implementing of posts in the KAMENG Frontier Division was to be carried out without reference to Eastern Command. XXIII Corps, therefore, in May 1962, on their own initiative, ordered the establishment of the TRI JUNCTION Post (DHOLA).

17

Army Headquarters instructions

- (a) Army Headquarters, as already brought out, followed up the "Forward Policy" directive by issuing instructions on the establishment of forward posts

in NEFA. In Western Command, so in Eastern Command, the details for the majority of the forward posts were given by Army Headquarters.

- (b) Army Headquarters, in their letter of 25 January, 1962 (Annexure 38), ordered the establishment of the twenty-four posts with twenty-seven additional ASSAM Rifles platoons. These platoons were to be found from the existing ASSAM Rifles units and, in lieu, a Central Reserve Police Battalion of twelve platoons was to be allotted to the Inspector General of ASSAM Rifles. All these posts, ordered by Army Headquarters, were EAST of TOWNS and, therefore, not directly connected with the main operations that developed later. (Locations of original posts, "Forward Policy" posts, and posts still in position are given in Sketch F).

- (c) On 11 February 1962, a meeting was held in GAWHATI and was attended by the Chief of the General Staff, the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, representatives of NORTH EAST Frontier Agency Administration and formation commanders in NEFA, including the Inspector General of ASSAM Rifles. The Chief of the General Staff stressed the urgency of establishing these "Forward Posts", and worked out the details of the release of the additional twenty-seven ASSAM Rifles platoons to the Army. It was decided that logistic support would continue to be the responsibility of the ASSAM Rifles, and that the dropping zones would be located, keeping in view the ceiling above which the KALINGA Airways supporting ASSAM Rifles could not fly (12,000 feet). Finally, the Chief of the General Staff reiterated the urgency of establishing these posts.

Establishment of posts other than DOWLA

18 The establishment of these posts continued from March to July/August 1962. The saga of their move forward, the hardships they endured, and the pressure put on subordinate formations by Army Headquarters for the early establishment of these posts is beyond the scope of this Review. It is, however, pertinent to note that logistic support, especially portage and airlift, could not keep up with the haste and hurry required for the establishment of the posts.

19 The manner in which these posts were established requires detailed scrutiny and it is worthwhile for the future that a proper procedure is worked out for the establishment of far-flung posts some 10 - 14 days' march from their bases. That many posts went without proper shelter, equipment, or even food for considerable periods is common knowledge in NEFA.

20 The net result is vividly brought out by IV Corps Commander in his signal of 16 October 1962 (Annexure 39). This signal, after going into the details of aircraft requirement

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in NEFA, ends as follows:-

"unless immediate orders are issued the supply situation of these posts which is already precarious may start resulting in starvation and desertion of ASSAM Rifle personnel."

It is pertinent to bring out here that IV Corps Commander in his previous appointment as Chief of the General Staff had been mainly instrumental for the haste and urgency in the establishment of these posts. Thus, he would not exaggerate the conditions of the ASSAM Rifle personnel manning these "Forward Posts". In fact, there were cases of posts without supplies and food for a week or more. The condition of the men living in these isolated bleak outposts at altitudes over 12,000 feet, without shelter, food, or fuel, can well be imagined.

21 From the above, it will be seen that, for proper planning and orderly progress, it is essential that lower formations are left to execute orders without interference and undue pressure from Army Headquarters, who neither know the local conditions nor details of execution and the attendant difficulties. Where there are so many unknown elements, including unmapped country, it is especially essential that the formations on the spot are consulted during the planning stage rather than arbitrary orders given, which are difficult or impossible to execute.

Background

22 As the DHOLA Post was the focus of the start of Sino-Indian hostilities in NEFA, it is important that the background to the establishment of the DHOLA Post is given in some detail.

23 Till the introduction of the "Forward Policy" in December 1961, the policy in NEFA in regard to activities in the vicinity of the McMAHON Line was as under:-

"NO patrolling except defensive patrolling is to be permitted within two to three miles of the McMAHON Line. In case a post has been established within two miles of the McMAHON Line, in accordance with paragraph 2 above, then defensive patrolling is permissible in the vicinity of this post." Para 2 of the latter laid down that, under certain conditions, post could be established NOT more than 2 miles as the crow flies from the McMAHON Line. (Headquarters Eastern Command letter No 120901/20/A/GS(0) of 9 June 1960 - Annexure 40).

24 The Chinese in June 1961 had, it appeared, patrolled across the McMAHON Line some 3 - 4 miles WEST of KHINZAMANE and had shown interest in the area. Thus, in March 1962, with the approaching of the patrolling season, Eastern Command, on the subject from XXIII Corps, asked Army Headquarters for permission to patrol the area of the McMAHON Line WEST of KHINZAMANE.

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25 On 27 April 1962, Army Headquarters gave their permission for patrolling as well as establishing new posts upto the McMAHON Line, without prior sanction. (Army Headquarters letter No 67045/GS/MO1 of 27 April 1962 - Annexure 41).

26 Originally, the intention of establishing a post WEST of KHINZAMANE was to establish one at the BHUTAN-INDIA-TIBET TRI JUNCTION, as given in the maps existing in May 1962. (Refer to Para 15 above). These maps showed the TRI JUNCTION at MM 7914.

27 The border on the map did not run along the watershed but was an arbitrary one running due WEST from KHINZAMANE. The watershed line and the old line are given in Sketch. The watershed TRI JUNCTION is some four miles NORTH of the one given in the maps then existing.

28 The post for various reasons was not established at the old TRI JUNCTION, but at DHOLA MM 8316. Capt MAHABIR PRASAD of 1 SIKH selected and established the DHOLA Post with a strength of one platoon of ASSAM Rifles on 4 June 1962.

Details of DHOLA Post

29 In August 1962, XXXIII Corps brought to the notice of Eastern Command the discrepancy between the arbitrary line drawn on the map and the line as it should be according to the watershed principle. (Annexure 42). This letter is important, as it gave the details of the two boundary lines. The main points are given below:- (For location of various features see Sketch B).

- (a) The boundary line printed on the maps had considerable inaccuracies, if the watershed principle and usage were to be applied.
- (b) According to local inhabitants (graziers) and the political representatives who accompanied the ASSAM Rifles to the DHOLA Post, the accepted/recognised boundary was the one based on the watershed principle. (The letter did not specify as to who accepted/recognised this boundary line). It was, however, common knowledge that the McMAHON Line was based on the watershed principle. The TRI-JUNCTION, according to the watershed principle, should be MM 7522 and not as shown in the map MM 7914.
- (c) There were three important approaches on the watershed boundary that lead into our area between KHINZAMANE and the recommended TRI-JUNCTION MM 7522. The approaches were as under:-
 - (i) THAGLA MM 8717
 - (ii) KARPOLA II MM 8321
 - (iii) MAMDANGLA MM 7822

- (d) XXXIII Corps recommended that one post should be established at THAGLA and another at TSANGLE MM 7719 to cover the other two passes. TSANGLE, as can be seen, according to the old boundary, was in BHUTAN. (BHUTAN, incidentally did raise this question in October, when a representative of theirs approached Corps Headquarters).
- (e) The letter went on to give recommendations for establishing these posts and also asked for a survey to be carried out. Pending approval of the recommendations, it was intended to carry out patrolling between KHINZAMANE and the Watershed TRI JUNCTION.
- (f) The last paragraph of the letter is of some importance and is reproduced below:-

"It will be seen from Sketch P attached (Sketch H of this Review) that the DHOLA Post grid reference (MM 8513), as reported earlier, is not correct and should be MM 8316. However, to avoid alarm and queries from all concerned, it is proposed to continue using the present grid reference in the location statement and situation reports until such time the case is finally decided by you. We hope it meets with your approval."

This, in effect, meant that the post was actually NORTH of the McMAHON Line as then marked on the map. The location as given out MM 8513 was just SOUTH and MM 8316 just NORTH of the Line. (Though the sketch showed this, the letter was not clear, and it was never really expressly brought out till 12 September 1962.

30 Eastern Command conveyed the contents of this letter to Army Headquarters on 31 August, 1962.

31 An incident of some interest to the above recommendations had occurred in the meantime and requires note. A Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau representative, on a reconnaissance of the area of THAGLA Ridge had found a wooden plank on 23 May 1962 with Chinese characters. These were later translated at TEZPUR and read "This is our river and mountain". This was conveyed by 4 Infantry Division to XXXIII Corps, Eastern Command, and Army Headquarters on 12 July 1962. (Annexure 43). This then was another pointer that NAMKA CHU and the THAGLA Ridge were sensitive areas.

32 On 8 September 1962, as is well known, DHOLA Post was surrounded by the Chinese, who, by the evening, were reported to be some 600 strong in the area. The History of LADAKH was being repeated in NEFA, but ironically hereafter it was events in the latter that would have repercussions in the former.

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SUMMARY

33 The "Forward Policy" was primarily for LADAKH, but in its wake, there had to be a probe forward in NEFA. The vacuum in the Chinese claimed territory in LADAKH was to be filled by us; it followed that the vacuum in our claimed territory in NEFA might well be filled by them. The Chinese, by staking claims both in LADAKH and NEFA, had indubitably correlated the two theatres.

34 Once we disturbed the status quo in one theatre, we should have been militarily prepared in both to back up our policy. Time and again, Eastern Command had asked for two more brigades for NEFA. Army Headquarters might have taken up this requirement with the Government; and, indeed, Lt Gen BM Kaul, has mentioned in his report the various papers put up for increasing the strength of the Army. (Appendix B Para 65). The fact, however, remains that General Staff should NOT have allowed themselves to be pushed into a military adventure, without the requisite forces.

35 DHOLA Post was established NORTH of the McMAHON Line as shown on maps prior to October/November 1962 edition. It is believed the old edition was given to the Chinese by our External Affairs Ministry to indicate the McMAHON Line. It is also learnt that we tried to clarify the error in our maps, but the Chinese did not accept our contention. The General Staff must have been well aware of this; and it was their duty to have warned lower formations regarding the dispute. This was not done, and the seriousness of the establishment of the DHOLA Post was not fully known to lower formations.

36 Our probe forward in other areas in NEFA did not figure in the operations, and, therefore, tended to recede in the background. The hardship and privations suffered by the men, however, had an important bearing on morale and leadership. NO troops placed in the circumstances as they were could be expected to obey orders, let alone fight. It is unplanned actions like these carried out in haste and hurry that changed disciplined men into a rabble, and an Army into a mob.

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SECTION 3

3 SEPTEMBER - 4 OCTOBER 1962 - FORMATION OF IV CORPS

GENERAL.

1 The story from 8 September, 1962, moves on quickly but relentlessly to the outbreak of hostilities. It is, therefore, necessary, before outlining the developments, to recapitulate the deployment of 4 Infantry Division in NEFA on 8 September, 1962. This has already been given broadly in the previous Sections, but, in detail, it was as under:- (Sketch J)

- (a) Headquarters 4 Infantry Division - TEZPUR
- (b) Headquarters 3 Infantry Brigade
 - (i) One Battalion (2 J and K) - area DOPORIJO - ZIRO in the SUBANSRI Frontier Division.
 - (ii) One Battalion (2 MADRAS) - area ALONG - TETING MECHUKA in the SIANG Frontier Division.
 - (iii) One Battalion (6 KUMAON) - area WALONG - TEJU in the LOHIT Frontier Division.
 - (iv) 2 RAJPUT - Relieved WALONG area, awaiting at CHARDUAR for move to peace area.
- (c) Headquarters 7 Infantry Brigade
 - Moved to TOWANG in March/April 1961.
 - (i) One Battalion (9 PUNJAB) - Moving to NYAMJANG CHU Sector. Actually only advance elements had reached LUMPU, while the remainder of the Battalion was strung out between SHAKTI, LUMLA, and TOWANG.
 - (ii) One Battalion (1 SIKH) - area TOWANG.
 - (iii) 1/9 GORKHA RIFLES - the outgoing battalion of the Brigade was at MISSAMARI. The relief battalion 4 GRENADIERS was also at MISSAMARI scheduled to move to DIRANG DZONG.

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(17) One Mountain Battery

- TOWANG area. The Animal Transport of this Battery, however, had earlier been brought back from TOWANG, as it was not possible to maintain them in TOWANG with the available air lift. Thus, the Battery's mobility was restricted to roads where jeeps could tow the guns.

(d) Seventy-seven ASSAM Rifles platoons

- deployed operationally under command 4 Infantry Division along the border outposts.

2 The slow progress of induction of troops into TOWANG from 1960 to 1962 was due to the following:-

- (a) A very limited road capacity. A 1-ton road had been completed to TOWANG in 1961. The state of the road, however, could not take sustained traffic.
- (b) A shortage of 1-ton trucks and jeeps. Those that were available were also not in good shape.
- (c) Limited air support and shortage of supply dropping equipment (parachutes).

DESCRIPTION OF THE KAMENG FRONTIER DIVISION EAST OF TOWANG (SKETCH K)

3 It is necessary in order to get a true picture of the conditions to get an idea of the geography of the country and the tracks. TOWANG is on a plateau some 10,000 feet high with higher hills NORTH of it. The track to SHAKTI via LUMLA winds along the sides of the plateau dropping to some 7250 feet at SHAKTI. SHAKTI is above and EAST of the NAYAMJANG CHU, which runs roughly NORTH and SOUTH, and, in the upper regions, enters TIBET EAST of KHINZAMANE. The river runs through a gorge some 300-400 feet below the shoulders of the gorge. From SHAKTI the track crosses the NAYAMJANG CHU over a narrow bridge difficult for Animal Transport, and then, after some 5 - 6 miles along the river, veers off WEST to LUMPU.

4 EAST of NAYAMJANG CHU and NORTH of LUMPU is the area of the scene of operations. (See panoramic photograph opposite and Sketch H). This area is dominated by two main features

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some 14,000 - 15,000 feet in height. The LEFT feature is known as TSANGDHAR and the RIGHT as HATUNGLA - the latter is so named because on the NORTH-EAST end of this ridge lies HATUNGLA Village. In the NORTH these two features drop down sharply onto a tributary of River NAYANJANG CHU called the NANKA CHU, which runs from WEST to EAST. NORTH of the NANKA CHU River is the controversial THAGLA Ridge.

5. DHOLA can be approached from two directions from LUMPU as under:-

- (a) From SOUTH via KANPOLA I - a long and difficult route some 3 days' march from LUMPU.
- (b) From NORTH via HATUNGLA along the NANKA CHU - This route was the one that was subsequently used and was in full view of the enemy.

6. The distance in the Sketch between the various places might appear short but, in terms of time, these are considerable. To get a true picture, therefore, it is necessary to bring out the marching time between the various places. These are as under:-

- (a) TOWANG via LUMLA to SHAKTI - Three days' march.
- (b) SHAKTI to LUMPU - One day's march.
- (c) LUMPU to DHOLA - A good two days' march for troops and three days' for porters. At that time, however, LUMPU was estimated to be only one day's march from DHOLA. This in itself shows the lack of knowledge then obtaining of that part of the country even at brigade and division level. The track was narrow and steep, especially beyond LUMPU and difficult even for porters.

RELIEF OF DHOLA (OPERATION LEGHORN)

7. On 9 September 1962 Eastern Command ordered XXXII Corps to take firm action to link up with DHOLA. In fact, Eastern Command ordered the immediate move of 9 PUNJAB and the remainder of the Brigade to follow within 48 hours. (Annexure 44).

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8 This peremptory order had little practical basis. It was bad enough uncovering TOWANG, but to order the move of the Brigade into difficult and little known country without planning and consideration of logistic support seems hard to understand. The General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command's clarification is that Chief of the Army Staff rang him up ordering him to move the Brigade for the relief of DHOLA.

9 XXXIII Corps on 10 September pointed out to Eastern Command the undesirability of uncovering TOWANG, and that a firm decision could only be taken after proper reconnaissance and appreciation by the Divisional and Brigade Commanders concerned. In the meantime, preliminary action was taken by XXXIII Corps and 2 RAJPUT were placed under command of 7 Infantry Brigade and ordered to move to TOWANG. 1/9 GORKHA RIFLES (also awaiting move to peace station) were to be in reserve. (Annexure 45).

10 From then on till 4 October, when IV Corps under Lt Gen RM Kaul was formed, it was a tug-of-war between Eastern Command and XXXIII Corps - the former pressing for a quick move of 7 Infantry Brigade to DHOLA area and the latter resisting any hasty step being taken.

11 Eastern Command, in turn, were being prodded by Army Headquarters. This was done more by personal phone calls to the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, and by calling him up for conferences at Army Headquarters and Defence Ministry. Unfortunately, there appears to be no telephone log regarding telephone conversations and Eastern Command are not aware of any minutes being kept of meetings, let alone issued. Thus important decisions at Defence Ministry and Army Headquarters level on Eastern Command operations can only be surmised from actions taken by Eastern Command and the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief's version of these decisions. It is strange also that Army Headquarters during this period did not issue a single clear-cut operation instruction. No appreciation of the possible Chinese reactions appears to have been made. On the other hand, a feeling was injected that there would be no major reaction.

12 Similarly, at Command level, no coordinated instructions were issued; and Command, in most cases, it appeared, transmitted to Corps what was ordered by Army Headquarters. Thus the operations, of necessity, lack a set pattern or continuity. In order to trace the operations with some cohesion, they have been dealt with under three heads as under:-

(a) Major developments

Under this the policy decisions by Army Headquarters, Eastern Command, and Corps will be discussed.

(b) Chinese build up

The Chinese build up and our intelligence system will be examined.

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(c) Other developments

Under this detailed developments will be traced.

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

XXIII Corps appreciation

15 XXIII Corps submitted their appreciation on 12 September 1962 (Annexure 46). The main points that emerged from the appreciation are given below:-

- (a) Chinese could build up upto a division less a regiment in the TOWANG Sector. (It is significant that the Chinese build up visualised was the same as that given in Army Headquarters Operation Instruction No 26 and NOT the two-divisional threat brought out in the Intelligence Review). Own strength that could be mustered immediately was perhaps a brigade of four to five battalions. Any major induction over and above this would take time. Further, because of difficulties in communications on our side, the Chinese could build up around the DHOLA area far quicker than us.
- (b) Our own logistic support had to be based on air and, because of uncertainty of air support in winter, stocking should be completed before operations commenced. On the other hand, Chinese communications being dependent exclusively by land they would be at a disadvantage compared to us when snow and winter conditions set in. ^{had} Thus in winter the Chinese may well have to reduce their commitment, if not withdraw altogether.
- (c) Troops would require arctic clothing and tentage - another major problem of induction.
- (d) XXIII Corps, therefore, recommended that a force of two battalions, based on LUMPU and DHOLA, should sit around the Chinese on our side of the old version of the McMAHON Line. The other two immediately available battalions to cover TOWANG. This action would not provoke the Chinese but would contain them and prevent any further ingress, and, at the same time, TOWANG would be covered.
- (e) Finally, Corps asked for clear-cut orders from Command.

Move of 62 Infantry Brigade

14 In the meantime, 62 Infantry Brigade was made available by Army Headquarters to move to NEFA or RANGARH. (Annexure 47)

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Report of the Chief of the Army Staff's Conference
12 September 1962 - 13 September 1962 (Annexure 48)

15 The Army Commander had been called upto DELHI on 12 September 1962 for a conference presided over by the Defence Minister. The first of the many that were to be held. From there he flew to TEZPUR for a conference with his subordinate commanders. Amongst others, XXXIII Corps Commander, 4 Infantry Division Commander, Inspector General Assam Rifles, Air representative and senior staff officers of the formations concerned attended the conference.

16 He opened the conference by reading out Army Headquarters signal of 12 September, 1962, permitting our posts and patrols to fire on Chinese intruding into our territory, if the situation justified it. The other points that were brought out were as under:-

- (a) Physical contact with DEOLA must be made.
- (b) Government would not accept any intrusion of the Chinese into our territory. If they come in, they must be thrown out by force. In this context, Chief of the Army Staff had ordered the Army Commander to stress that "No weakness will be shown". This was, therefore, reflected in Eastern Command signal of 9 September 1962.
- (c) The Army Commander felt that there was some doubt in the minds of officers regarding the alignment of the McMAHON Line WEST of KHINZAMANE. He clarified that the Government had always maintained that McMAHON Line was based on the watershed principle and, therefore, it ran along the THAGLA Ridge. Thus DEOLA was well inside the McMAHON Line.
- (d) The Army Commander then stated that he had pointed out at DELHI that we must expect reactions by the Chinese along NEFA/TIBET Border, where our garrisons were relatively weak compared to the Chinese. Government had accepted this, but, at the same time, directed that, should any of our posts be lost, every effort will be made to retake them. The DIB who was at the meeting in DELHI, in this connection had stated that he considered that the likely Chinese targets would be TAKSING, MECHUKA, and TUTING. The Chief of the Army Staff had then directed that, with the move of 62 Infantry Brigade to NEFA, these places would be reinforced as under:-
 - (i) TUTING to be made up to a battalion strength.
 - (ii) TAKSING to be reinforced by a company.

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- (iii) One Battalion of 62 Infantry Brigade to be moved to ALONG. (Presumably to reinforce MECHUKA).
- (d) Regarding the establishment of post at THAGLA, the Foreign Secretary in the meeting at DELHI suggested that we establish a post next to the Chinese. The Army Commander, however, had considered that this should only be done after the winter.
- (e) The Government had not agreed to the use of close air support. Logistic air support for XXXIII Corps should as far as possible be found from within XXXIII Corps allotment. Army Headquarters, however, had agreed to try and assist with additional support.

17 It will be seen that there are some important and far-reaching points arising out of the DELHI and TEZPUR conferences. These are given below:-

- (a) The Army Commander in his report (Appendix A has brought out that the Defence Minister categorically stated that in view of the TOP SECRET nature of the conference NO minutes would be kept. This practice, it appears, was followed at all the conferences that were held by the Defence Minister in connection with these operations. This is a surprising decision and one which could and did lead to grave consequences. It absolved in the ultimate analysis anyone of the responsibility of any major decision. Thus, it could and did lead to decisions being taken without careful and considered thought on the consequences of those decisions.
- (b) The Government's stipulation that any Chinese entering our territory would be evicted by force, and that our territory went up to the THAGLA Ridge literally meant that the Defence Minister's meeting at DELHI had already decided on the Chinese eviction from the KAMENG Frontier Division. A decision that was later given out in writing on 22 September 1962 by the Government.
- (c) The Army Commander's clarification of the McMAHON Line and the doubts that existed in the minds of some officers need examining. It is clear in the planning stage and after the establishment of the DHOLA Post that XXXIII Corps and formations under it were working under the impression that the McMAHON Line as such was as given in the map then available to them. XXXIII Corps letter of 24 February 1962 (Annexure 37) recommending the establishment of posts specifically mentioned the establishment of a post at the old version of the TRI JUNCTION (Sketch H). Later, in their letter of 15 August 1962 (Annexure 42), after the DHOLA Post was established, XXXIII Corps brought

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out the doubt and asked for clarification as also the fact if posts could be established on the THAGLA Ridge. No clarification of the alignment nor decision for establishing posts was given till this conference. Had this been done earlier perhaps we might have forestalled the Chinese.

- (d) The acceptance in toto of DIB's estimate of the Chinese reactions in TAKSING, MECHUKA, and TUTING, and the reinforcing of these places was militarily unsound. This went completely against the concept of the Defence Line and was perhaps the start of frittering away of forces in forward areas rather than strengthening the Defence Line.
- (e) The Foreign Secretary's suggestion of establishing a post on THAGLA Ridge alongside the Chinese, viewed against the happenings in LADAKH, seems incredible.

18 The above bring out that military decisions must only be taken by those who are in the full knowledge of the military situation and can appreciate the tactical implications.

Army Commander's Conference - 14 September 1962

19 The Army Commander followed up the 13 September Conference by another on 14 September. This dealt with the executive action to be taken on the points brought out on 13 September. These were as under:-

- (a) 62 Infantry Brigade less a battalion for ALONG to be initially located at a suitable road/rail head with an airfield such as TEZPUR or JORHAT.
- (b) Reinforcing of the places given in 13 September Conference to be carried out with speed.
- (c) XXXIII Corps asked to formulate a new plan for the eviction of the Chinese from our territory. The plan would be seen by Chief of the Army Staff.

Resume of other developments in NEFA

20 The moving of troops and the other developments in NEFA, as already brought out, will be discussed in detail later. But, in order to maintain the continuity of the story, the developments that took place between 8 September - 22 September are briefly described in the subsequent paragraphs.

21 9 PUNJAB had made contact with the DHOLA Post and move of 9 PUNJAB to the DHOLA Arsa was in progress. Meanwhile, Army Headquarters was prodding Eastern Command for the move of the whole Brigade to DHOLA, and Eastern Command, in turn, was pressing XXXIII Corps.

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22 The Chinese had withdrawn NORTH of the NAMKA CHU, but, as our build up progressed in DHOLA area, the Chinese also increased their strength NORTH of the NAMKA CHU. In fact, their build up behind the THAGLA Ridge was far greater than ours, though what could be seen on the THAGLA Ridge had not yet reached any major proportion.

Meeting in the Defence Minister's Room on 22 September 1962

23 The details of the meeting again are not known to this Headquarters (Operations Review) except what is given in outline in the "Sequence of Events" issued to us by Army Headquarters.

24 This meeting, once again, reiterated the Government's decision to evict the Chinese, who had intruded into NEFA.

25 The Chief of the Army Staff gave out the possible reactions of the Chinese as under:-

- (a) The Chinese could send more reinforcements to the DHOLA area.
- (b) They could retaliate elsewhere.
- (c) They could retaliate in LADAKH.

26 The Chief of the Army Staff considered that the Chinese would most likely react in LADAKH and capture our post in the GALWAN Valley and others, and so achieve their aim of reaching the 1960 claim line.

27 The Foreign Secretary, however, considered that the Chinese would not react in any strength but, perhaps, would capture one or two posts.

28 The Chief of the Army Staff then asked for written instructions of the Government to evict the Chinese in DHOLA area. The following Government directions were then given:-

"The decision throughout has been as discussed at previous meetings that the Army should prepare and throw the Chinese out as soon as possible. The Chief of the Army Staff was accordingly directed to take action for the eviction of the Chinese in KAMENG Frontier Division of NEFA as soon as he is ready."

29 Army Headquarters, in turn, issued these directions on 22 September 1962 to both Western and Eastern Commands. (Annexure 25).

Points arising out of the meeting

30 It is apparent from the records of the meeting that there was a general feeling prevailing that there would be no major reactions by the Chinese. Why this should be so

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on 22 September 1962, after all the firing incidents and the surrounding of posts in LADAKH that had already taken place, is not known. It will also be remembered that the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Command had in August written in no uncertain manner the consequences of our taking any provocative action.

21 Whether the advice given by Chief of the Army Staff in this meeting was based on any operational and intelligence appreciation is not known. It is, however, obvious from the resources the Chinese were then known to have that they could react strongly and simultaneously in both theatres.

22 It was for the General Staff to have made out a written appreciation for not only the Chief of the Army Staff but also for the Government bringing out the military implications and then leaving the political decision to the latter. It is only when appreciations are made in black and white at higher levels that full implications of a military situation can be assessed. To base major military actions on a doubtful intelligence surmise is breaking all precepts of war and inviting sure disaster.

XXIII Corps plan for eviction of the Chinese

23 Whilst these developments were taking place and troops were being moved to LUMPU, XXIII Corps, 4 Infantry Division, and 7 Infantry Brigade Commanders were carrying out reconnaissance and formulating a plan for the eviction of the Chinese.

24 On 30 September 1962, XXIII Corps forwarded their plan to Headquarters Eastern Command. (Annexure 49). A number of stipulations were made, before the plan could be executed. The plan and the stipulations are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

25 The Plan

- (a) The plan envisaged a limited task of securing a foothold across the NAMKA CHU River and clearing the Chinese from those areas. 7 Infantry Brigade would require three infantry battalions, a battery plus of guns, and a company of MMG for the task.
- (b) It will be seen that this plan only dealt with the action against the Chinese in the THAGLA Area and did not cover the defence aspect in the remainder of the KAMENG Frontier Division. This is understandable, as the Army Commander in the conference on 14 September only required plans for the eviction of the Chinese from the THAGLA Area.
- (c) The execution of the plan was dependent upon the speed of the logistic build up, but it was envisaged that troops could concentrate by 10 October 1962.

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36 Stipulations

The stipulations laid down were brought out in the covering letter. The main ones are as under:-

- (a) Earliest the operation could start was 10 October 1962, and the latest by 15 October 1962. The latter date was fixed on the basis that, after that date, there would not be sufficient time to build winter shelters for the troops in the area.
- (b) The operation to only commence once a minimum holding of 530 tons of stores was in position in DHOLA area.
- (c) Fire support of a minimum of one battery plus a troops was required. The guns had to be air-dropped, as there was no other means of taking them.
- (d) The attack could only be carried out from the Western flank and hence occupation of any areas (TSANGLE) on the Western flank across the NAMKA CHU should only be done at the commencement of operations, in order NOT to disclose the decision of attack. When dealing with the developments in detail, we will see that the occupation of TSANGLE was carried out prematurely.

37 The plan and the stipulations were not subsequently adhered to, but they have been brought out, as they have an important bearing on the developments that followed.

Formation of new corps

38 On 4 October 1962, XXXIII Corps ceased to be responsible for NEFA and was replaced by IV Corps with Lt Gen BM KAIL as Corps Commander. IV Corps was not yet raised; yet it was required to simultaneously form, function, and conduct operations in NEFA.

39 Army Headquarters had placed the whole of the Eastern Command Northern Border under IV Corps. (Army Headquarters signal No 161320/MO4(B) dated 4 October, 1962 - Annexure 50) This was, however, reduced by Eastern Command to NEFA only vide their signals of 4 and 5 October 1962. (Annexure 51).

40 The change over of Corps brought to an end the unequal tug-of-war between Eastern Command and XXXIII Corps. The phase of pushing and prodding of XXXIII Corps by Eastern Command to hasten the operations finally ended. Instead a new phase had started where the new Corps leaped into an operation without first considering the implications.

41 It will, therefore, be of interest, to examine the Chinese build up as known till then in order to see if XXXIII Corps were justified in their caution.

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CHINESE BUILD UP

42 Much has been said regarding the Chinese not reacting offensively. The Minister concerned, the General Staff, and the DIB had all come out with it at one time or another. The basis for this, one would expect, would be from military and other intelligence agencies. It is, therefore, worthwhile to examine the Intelligence system for the following:-

- (a) The information on the Chinese build up and its implications.
- (b) The working of the Intelligence system and its influence on planning.

43 We have seen that the threat on the TOWANG Sector, on which Eastern Command and XXXIII Corps planned was as laid down by Army Headquarters in their Operation Instruction No 26 and not the increased threat indicated in the Annual Intelligence Review CHINA-TIBET 1959-1960. The reasons for this have already been explained in Chapter II, Section 1, Paras 23 and 24). The detail deployment of the Chinese forces, as known in the beginning of September 1962, opposite the TOWANG Sector was the same as given in the Intelligence Review CHINA-TIBET 1959-1960 (Annexure 9). This was as under:- (Sketch F)

- (a) Division/Headquarters and one regiment - TSETHANG
- (b) Second regiment with HQ at TSONA DZONG deployed as under:-
 - (i) One battalion - TSONA DZONG
 - (ii) One battalion - SHAO (opposite BUMLA)
 - (iii) One battalion - LE (opposite KHEINZAMANE)
- (c) Third regiment with HQ at LHONTSE DZONG deployed as under:-
 - (i) One battalion - LHONTSE DZONG
 - (ii) One battalion - SANGACHOLING (opposite LONGJU area)
 - (iii) One battalion - CHOSHAM (opposite LONGJU area)

44 Roads from respective regimental bases to forward areas had also been completed.

45 It will be seen, therefore, that, from 1960 to the beginning of September 1962, there were no changes in the enemy deployment, as known to us.

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46 From the beginning of September 1962, increased Chinese activity was noticed in this Sector. This was brought out in the Weekly Intelligence Summary No 38/62 dated 12 September 1962. It mentioned a great deal of vehicular traffic between TSETHANG, TSONA DZONG, and forward to battalion areas during the preceding two weeks. It is significant that this Weekly Summary is signed on 12 September, and the DHOLA incident took place on 8 September. It may be asked why this movement was not reported or why a special situation report was not issued in the preceding week so as to be of some use to the field formation.

47 It is significant also that it was only after the surrounding of the DHOLA Post that increased Chinese activity was reported by the Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau representative in the TOWANG Sector. Important intelligence reported by the Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau and other sources is given below. These have been taken from 4 Infantry Division's daily situation reports.

(a) 10 September 1962 (Annexure 52)

Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau reported the following:-

- (i) 11 tents were seen in Chinese territory along the border between LE and LAMBU. (This could indicate a company plus).
- (ii) All civil population in TSONA DZONG and border areas was evacuated to the rear during first week of September 1962. (This could be for security reasons and also for making use of civil accommodation. It, however, indicated that the Chinese were getting ready for a show down).
- (iii) About 40 big tents seen in Area TSONA - DZONG. (This could well represent a battalion).
- (iv) Telephone line installed upto NORTH of THAGLA Ridge in the first week of September 1962.
- (v) 11 more tents pitched at LE and KHINZAMANE (Another company).
- (vi) Four huts opposite and WEST of KHINZAMANE.
- (vii) Telephone line laid to LAMBU.

The reason for the activity at LAMBU is not quite clear. It is situated midway between the two respective routes TSONA DZONG - KHINZAMANE and TSONA DZONG - BUMLA. It may perhaps be as a deception plan to take away attention from the THAGLA Area.

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(b) 12 September 1962 (Annexure 53)

Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau party ex LUMPU arrived DHOLA Post. The party reported a Chinese post 50 - 60 strong 1000 yards NORTH EAST of the DHOLA Post. This information by itself may not be important, but the cognisance taken of it at the Defence Ministry and Army Headquarters level was out of all proportion to the information conveyed. This will be seen when dealing with detailed developments. It may be mentioned here that the Intelligence Bureau posts have a direct link to the Intelligence Bureau at DELHI.

(c) 13 September 1962 (Annexure 54)

Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau reported the following:-

- (i) Track SHAO towards BUMLA upto DOMCHANGLA showed movement of large bodies.
- (ii) 40 wheeled guns arrived TSONA DZONG during the preceding week (Approximately three Chinese artillery regiments equivalent of one divisional artillery).
- (iii) 8 tents near SHAO (possibly one company).
- (iv) 50 Chinese soldiers (two platoons) area THAGLA.
- (v) Two companies reported between NAMKA CHU and THAGLA Ridge (The effect of this and that of the report of 12 September 1962 are dealt with together under detailed developments).

(d) 15 September 1962

In addition to the two companies already reported NORTH of the NAMKA CHU, troops in DHOLA reported another company in the NAMKA CHU area.

(e) 19 September 1962

Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau reported another 30 huts and tents near SHAO. (Two/three companies worth of troops).

Summary of build up

- 48 (a) The total build up from the reports would amount to approximately four battalions. Most of these reports indicate new locations and hence could either be fresh troops or troops moved out of permanent locations. With the increased movement going on between TSETHANG and forward areas, it could be safely assumed that upto one more regiment had been inducted in by 19/20 September 1962.

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- (b) Concentration on THAGLA Ridge and within supporting distance of it by 18/20 September could be taken as -
 - (i) One battalion plus - THAGLA
 - (ii) One battalion plus, which could also be moved to THAGLA within a day, in area - LE
- (c) Concentration opposite BUMLA built up to a regiment.
- (d) Movement of 40 guns into TSONA DZONG also gave an indication of a divisional concentration in TSONA DZONG and forward of it.
- (e) Civilians being moved out could either mean making room for extra troops or indicated impending action.
- (f) Keeping estimates to a minimum, a division plus had concentrated in TSONA DZONG and forward of it by 20 September. Bearing in mind that TSONA DZONG is only some 20 - 25 miles from the border, and as the roads go up to two miles short of the border, it would imply that the Chinese were in a position to concentrate a division on the border within three days, if required.
- (g) The concentration opposite BUMLA showed that we could expect operations EAST of KHMIZAMANE as well, that is, towards TOWANG.

49 A curious point is that the Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau abruptly started giving their reports of Chinese build up to 4 Infantry Division from 10 September, soon after the DHOLA Post was surrounded. These, however, petered out by 19/20 September. Thus, intelligence, apart from reports by own troops in contact, in this crucial period between 20 September and 19 October was not available to the commanders.

50 It has already been brought out that these reports reached the Director of Intelligence Bureau direct and hence presumably were immediately available to the Government and General Staff Branch at Army Headquarters.

51 Army Headquarters Weekly Intelligence Summaries, it appears, quoted verbatim from these Intelligence Bureau Reports but no assessment seems to have been made or given out to lower formations. These weekly intelligence summaries, in most cases, produced intelligence one to two weeks old and it took another week or so for the summaries to reach lower formations. Thus, the intelligence was of little value to the field commanders. We have already seen that General Staff continued to press for the capture of the THAGLA Ridge right up to 10 October, the date of the first clash with the Chinese. It is, therefore, obvious that either they were ignorant of the build up reported or failed to take due cognisance of the threat.

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52 The relationship between the Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau and the lower formations appears rather involved. Though the field formations got the local Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau reports their reliability could not be assessed by them, as these had first to be vetted by the Director of Intelligence Bureau in DELHI and then passed down the line from the IMI.

53 XXXIII Corps did bring out in their appreciation of 30 September 1962 (Annexure 49) the possible build up, but this was based on the original enemy deployment. The reason for this was that, till then the Weekly Intelligence Summaries received in Corps did not indicate any major build up or activity.

REVIEW OF INTELLIGENCE SYSTEM

54 Collection

- (a) The collection of intelligence in general was not satisfactory. Before the DHOLA Post incident there was no intelligence on the build up, but, after the DHOLA Post had been surrounded, there was a spate of it for a week - most of it implying movements taking place in the preceding two weeks. This could mean that -
 - (i) our acquisition of intelligence is too slow to be of any use for operations;
 - (ii) the intelligence is built around to suit the action that has happened. Then again intelligence other than that acquired in the field was not available after 20 September till the end of the operations.
- (b) The abrupt starting and ceasing of Intelligence Bureau reports can only result in creating in field commanders a lack of confidence in the Intelligence Bureau organisation;
- (c) The reporting of intelligence itself was vague. The sources did not appear to have been trained to pick out the important and the essentials.

55 Collation and Evaluation

- (a) Even from these vague reports attempt could have been made to evaluate the build up by the Director of Military Intelligence. It is agreed that because of the vague nature of the reports the evaluation may not have been accurate, but that there was a major build up could have been brought out. As it was, bits and pieces of the build up given in the Weekly Intelligence Summaries had little value.
- (b) No attempt was made to link up the new build up with the old deployment. Thus field formations had little guidance whether these were fresh troops or old ones moving to new locations.

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Dissemination

- (a) The main channel that appears to have been employed by Army Headquarters for the dissemination of intelligence before and during the operations was the Weekly Intelligence Summaries. We have already seen that the intelligence itself brought out in these summaries was two-weeks or more old. On top of that the processing took some more time and, by the time the Intelligence Summaries were signed, the information was three to four-weeks old. Reaching field formations, especially in NEFA, took another week or more. Thus, by the time the information reached the field, there was a lapse of some four to six weeks and the developments reported were past history.
- (b) The intelligence of the initial build up reported opposite KAHENG Sector was sent in the Weekly Intelligence Summary of 12 September, which reached NEFA formations between 24 - 25 September, whereas the DHOLA Post was surrounded on 8 September 1962.
- (c) It is, therefore, obvious that much faster means must be employed to send out processed and important information to field formations, if it is to be of any use to them.

57 Having examined the intelligence system in some detail, there is no doubt that a major overhauling of the system is required. The intelligence is obviously haphazardly collected, badly processed, unimaginatively put across and inefficiently disseminated. On the other hand, the General Staff Branch at Army Headquarters and the higher commanders also showed a serious lack of intelligence-mindedness. No notice was taken of the carefully assessed build up brought out in 1960 and 1961, but reliance was placed on verbal interpretation by the Director of Intelligence Bureau of his assessment based on isolated cases. The main impression under which the General Staff and other senior commanders acted and staked all on was that there would be NO Chinese reactions.

DETAILED DEVELOPMENTSGeneral

58 The major developments that have been brought out in this period of 8 September - 4 October 1962 are -

- (a) 8 September, 1962 - Surrounding of the DHOLA Post.
- (b) 9 September, 1962 - Ordering of move of 7 Infantry Brigade to DHOLA Area by Eastern Command.
- (c) 12 - 14 September, 1962 - Conferences at Defence Ministry, Army Headquarters, and TEZPUR.

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- (d) 22 September, 1962 - Firm orders for the eviction of the Chinese.
- (e) 30 September, 1962 - XXXIII Corps plan for partial eviction only and not before 10 October, 1962.
- (f) 4 October, 1962 - Change over of Corps.

59 The detailed developments will now be considered to see how they fitted into the major decisions or whether the developments occurred irrespective of them.

Detailed developments - 8 September to 14 September, 1962

60 On 9 September, GOC XXXIII Corps reported back from leave. He informed GOC-in-C Eastern Command in a signal No 02156 of 10 September (Annexure 45) the various actions he had taken or contemplated taking. These in the main are as under :-

- (a) On night 8/9 September, 9 PUNJAB ordered to concentrate at LUMPU.
- (b) Divisional Commander ordered to carry out reconnaissance and submit proposal for meeting the threat.
- (c) Because of the importance of TOWANG, he did not consider it advisable to uncover TOWANG.
- (d) Consequently, he had ordered the move of 2 RAJPUT ex CHARDUAR to TOWANG.
- (e) In addition, he was considering moving 4 GRENADIERS on arrival NEFA to TOWANG.
- (f) His immediate requirement was for six helicopters.

61 On 10 September, Eastern Command followed up their signal of 9 September (Annexure 44) by asking XXXIII Corps to confirm maintenance possible for the task and after consulting Eastern Air Command to intimate additional air lift required. (Annexure 55)

62 On 11 September, General Staff in their signal (Annexure 56) allotted 7 Infantry Brigade two helicopters, but did not agree to close air support. Air transport support and tactical reconnaissance could, however, be used. They further asked if Eastern Command required additional assistance. This obviously implied assistance concerning air only. Lt Gen BM KAUL, however, in his report (Annexure B, Para 3(c)) has mentioned that it is not within his knowledge whether any such additional assistance either in troops or in logistic support was ever sought by Eastern Command from Army Headquarters, and that he (Lt Gen KAUL) was subsequently hampered in his operations because of the lack of both. From the above, it is apparent that Army Headquarters signal only applies to any additional air support.

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63 On 12 September, Army Headquarters permitted the use of force on Chinese entering Indian territory. (Annexure 57) It will be recalled that this latitude had so far not been given to Western Command. There the posts, on 22 July (Annexure 23) were permitted to fire if they were threatened. Army Headquarters continued to treat the two Commands in water-tight compart. There was no effort by them to coordinate the actions between the two Commands. In fact, it was NOT till much later and that after Western Command asked for information that developments in one Command were passed on to the other.

64 The conferences of 13 and 14 September by GOC-in-C Eastern Command, held in TEZPUR, and the decisions taken have already been brought out. The developments that followed bring us to the second stage in the examination of detailed developments.

14 September to 16 September 1962

65 Logistical backing

Along with the Army Commander's conference on 13 - 14 September, an administrative conference was also held in TEZPUR, presided over by Brigadier Incharge Administration, Eastern Command. It brought out the build up to be carried out for the operations (Annexure 58). Broadly, the logistic arrangements were to be as under:-

- (a) The basis of stocking was that LUMPU would be the base for operations in the DHOLA Area. This presumably was planned, as at that time it was believed that LUMPU was one day's march from the DHOLA Area.
- (b) The strengths to be maintained were as under:-
 - (i) TOWANG - 2000 personnel
200 animals
 - (ii) LUMPU - 3700 personnel
300 animals
 - (iii) LUNLA - 300 personnel
100 animals
- (c) Initial stocking was to be as under:-
 - (i) 15 days supplies and maintenance stores.
 - (ii) 30 days reserve supplies.
 - (iii) 30 days worth of ordnance stores including tentage and snow clothing. (This does not refer to the initial issue but maintenance for replacement).
 - (iv) Three first line scales of ammunition.

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- (d) Other decisions were taken to step up the administrative arrangements at the base airfield to meet the increased requirement. These decisions were taken in conjunction with representative Eastern Air Command.

65

Developments in DHOLA Area

- (a) On 15 September 1962, a signal was issued by General Staff that brings out vividly the importance given to the Intelligence Bureau reports. Extract of the signal is reproduced below:- (Annexure 59)

"CP LEBHORN (.) ref conversation
COAS/GOCING of date (.) 9 PUNJAB
as soon as possible after arr in
DHOLA area will (.) alfa (.) capture
the Chinese post 1000 yards north
east of DHOLA post (.) bravo (.)
contain Chinese come south THAGLA (.)
charlie (.) if possible est post
KARPOLA IN 8220 and YUNTSO LA IN
8220 pass."

- (b) The Chinese post and concentration, it will be recalled, were reported by the Subsidiary Intelligence Bureau on 12 and 13 September 1962, respectively. (See Para 47(b) and (c)(v) above). It seems incredulous that the major build up reported by the Intelligence Bureau on the same date was not given due cognisance, but reports involving minor tactical actions were immediately acted upon. The explanation for this can only be that the DIB highlighted the importance of these reports and prevailed upon the Defence Ministry and General Staff to act on them and, at the same time, did not give due weightage to the enemy build up.
- (c) In any case, the General Staff, sitting in DELHI, ordering an action against a position 1000 yards NORTH EAST of DHOLA Post - to say the least - is astounding. The country was not known, the enemy situation vague, and for all that there may have been a ravine in between, but yet the order was given. This order could go down in the annals of History as being as incredulous as the order for "The Charge of the Light Brigade".
- (d) That no action was taken on this signal is natural, but it was orders such as these that could well shake field commanders' confidence in their higher commanders and the General Staff.
- (e) Not content with ordering such actions and interfering in details, General Staff followed it up by a reminder the same day in the evening asking for confirmation that action was being taken. (Annexure 60).

Developments 15 to 22 September, 1962

67 On 15 September, GOC-in-C Eastern Command was again called for a conference to DELHI at the Defence Ministry. At this conference, the Director of Intelligence Bureau pointed out further threats in NEFA, particularly against MAJA, MECHUKA, TAKSING, TUTING, and WALONG Sectors. Decision regarding the reinforcing of these sectors was taken and notified by Eastern Command to XXIII Corps by signal on 17 September, 1962. (Annexure 51). The main points in the signal were as under:-

- (a) Posts to be established NORTH and NORTH-WEST of IMOLA between IMOLA and McMahon Line. A post, if possible, to be established at TANGUL.
- (b) MAJA to be reinforced by a platoon.
- (c) One company to reinforce MECHUKA.
- (d) One more company to TAKSING. This was in addition to one ordered previously to TAKSING.
- (e) One battalion to WALONG, if possible.

68 The significant points that arise from these orders are discussed below:-

- (a) Troops would be further dispersed. Two battalions of the incoming 62 Infantry Brigade would be committed under 5 Infantry Brigade in ALONG and WALONG respectively, leaving only one battalion with the Brigade.
- (b) The reinforcing of WALONG by a battalion indicated a major shift in the policy of the "Defence Line". It will be remembered that Army Headquarters Operation Instruction No 25 (Annexure 27) and Eastern Command Operation Instruction No 8 (Annexure 28) laid down the "Defence Line" in the LOHIT Frontier Division would be based on TEJU - BATULING - JAIRAMPUR. The effect of this change will be seen when dealing with the Operations.
- (c) The higher direction of war had come down to ordering of company and platoon posts. NO thought appears to have been given to higher planning and the overall arrangements required to meet the possible Chinese reactions.

69 After a conference with the Air representative of Eastern Air Command, GOC XXIII Corps sent, on 19 September 1962, his proposals based on availability of aircraft and other logistical resources. (Annexure 52). The main points in the proposal were:-

- (a) Reinforcement of MAJA not possible due to lack of porters.

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- (b) Second company to TAIKING recommended to stop at LIMKING.
- (c) The battalion then responsible from TEJU to WALONG (6 HMMACHON) to be concentrated at WALONG and the battalion ordered from 62 Infantry Brigade to WALONG to be first positioned in TEJU.
- (d) 62 Infantry Brigade less two battalions (or in other words, with one battalion) to be in MISAMARI area.

70 These proposals appear to have been accepted by Headquarters Eastern Command and orders were given out for the moves by XXXIII Corps on 20 September 1962. (Annexure 63).

71 Meanwhile, in the TOLANG Sector, the concentration of 7 Infantry Brigade at HEMPU was progressing. 9 PUNJAB had concentrated in the DROIA Area by 15 September 1962.

72 By 21 September, 62 Infantry Brigade had arrived in NEFA and was placed under command of 4 Infantry Division for deployment as given out already.

73 On 20 September, the first exchange of fire between the Chinese and our troops took place. On 21 September, this was again repeated, but this time with greater intensity and mortars were also used by the Chinese. (Annexure 64). The Chinese build up during the month and this firing were pointers to the shape of things that could be expected in NEFA Sector as well. We have already seen the tension that existed in LADANG at the beginning of September, 1962; thus there could be no doubt that the Chinese would fight both in NEFA and LADANG to hold on to what they claimed.

74 On 22 September, the signal giving the formal decision of the Government for evicting the Chinese from the KAMENG Frontier Division was issued by Army Headquarters. This, as will be recalled, was as a result of the meeting held in the Defence Minister's room on the same date.

75 It is curious that this TOP SECRET meeting, which had decided on an action of great import to the nation and one that by its very nature required complete secrecy for success was published in the TIMES OF INDIA on 27 September 1962. The publication is reproduced below:-

***INSTRUCTIONS TO ARMY**

The Government of INDIA took the political decision 10 days ago to use force, if necessary to throw the Chinese intruders out. The Army was accordingly instructed to take the steps necessary to clear the Chinese from Indian territory across THAGIA ridge, if they did not withdraw on their own in reasonable time.

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The Army authorities have been given the freedom to choose the time and tactics best suited for an operation of this type, the object of which is not to capture or inflict casualties on the Chinese intruders but force them to withdraw to their side of the border."

76 The Chinese intelligence may have come to know of our intentions, but for it to have been publicly brought out would certainly confirm any doubt they had. This breach of security and others before and after were to plague our operations and also perhaps force the hands of Government and the Army to carry on an operation that militarily had become unsound. It is important, therefore, for the future that these breaches of security do NOT occur and the loopholes that exist are properly sealed. This requires a thorough probe in the Ministry and Army Headquarters for sources of these leaks.

Description of ground - LUMPU-DHOIA Area (Sketch H and panoramic photograph opposite page 56)

77 From 22 September 1962 onwards the scene shifts more and more to the LUMPU-DHOIA Area till the Chinese attack on 20 October. It is, therefore, necessary to give a brief description of this area in order to understand the developments that occurred. The general description of the ground has already been given and, as such, only the details will now be filled in. This should be followed on Sketches H and I.

78 LUMPU is some 9000 feet high, situated on an Eastern spur of the HATUNGIA feature. It is fairly open and has a dropping zone. From here the track goes along the sides of the HATUNGIA Plateau to HATUNGIA itself, which is 10,000 - 11,000 feet high and some four hours' march from LUMPU. HATUNGIA Spur is important in that it dominates the NAMKA CHU and NYAMJANGCHU approaches. From HATUNGIA the track gets rugged and is difficult going down to Bridge I on the NAMKA CHU. HATUNGIA to Bridge I is again four hours' march and, thus, from LUMPU to Bridge I is a normal day's march.

79 Bridge I connects the LUMPU-DHOIA Track to KHINZAMANE. From Bridge I the DHOIA Track goes along the SOUTH bank of the NAMKA CHU to Bridge 2, some four hours' march. From Bridge 2 the old track crosses over to the NORTH bank to Bridge 3. Bridge 2 was partially destroyed by the Chinese. The Chinese, however, were right up to the Bridge on the NORTH side and hence a new track was made on the SOUTH side of the River to the vicinity of DHOIA Post, against about four hours' march from Bridge 2. Thus, from Bridge 1 to DHOIA was another day's march making a total of two days' march from LUMPU to DHOIA for small parties and approximately three days for larger ones.

80 DHOIA lies on the track from Bridge 3 to TSANGDHAR. It is some six hours' marching distance from TSANGDHAR. A track from DHOIA leads to Bridge 4, which is about an hour's march. Bridge 3 and Bridge 4 had both been destroyed by the Chinese earlier.

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81 Bridge 5 can only be approached from TSANGDHAR and through difficult country. It is approximately a day to a day and a half's march from TSANGDHAR.

82 TSANGDHAR has the only bit of open ground in the area and this was used for a dropping zone. The other places that figure in the area are given below:-

(a) **TSANGJIE**

Approximately 13,000 feet high and a day's uphill march from Bridge 5.

(b) **SUNGJIAN**

NORTH of TSANGDHAR on the NORTH bank of the NAMKA CHU below Bridge 4 and Bridge 5 and about 1,000 - 1,500 feet higher than the NAMKA CHU. It is connected to TSANGDHAR by what came to be known as Log/Temporary Bridge.

83 A general description of the country around NAMKA CHU is given below:-

- (a) NAMKA CHU varies in width from 30 to 50 feet and is extremely fast-flowing, as the river bed drops sharply all the way from Bridge 5 to Bridge 1. Water can rise upto 8 - 10 feet in the monsoon but was fordable when the main hostilities started. The river bed is in a cutting some 20 - 30 feet deep with vertical banks and has few approaches to the water line.
- (b) From the shoulders of the river bank the ground rises gradually in the NORTH towards the THAGIA Ridge for some 300 to 400 feet except around SINGJANG, where it broadens out into pasture land some 1,000 yards or more wide. After the gradual rise to the THAGIA feature, there is sheer cliff broken by a single difficult track running EAST to WEST from THAGIA Pass itself. The Chinese were, therefore, deployed behind the Ridge, on it, and in the vicinity of the river.
- (c) On the SOUTH side the rise is gradual for some 500 - 1,000 feet and then becomes steep.
- (d) The country is thickly wooded with thick undergrowth especially in the valley to about 12,000 feet altitude or some $\frac{2}{3}$ of the distance up the features.
- (e) A word regarding the Bridges. These are merely logs tied together making a bridge some 4 - 5 feet wide with the odd plank on top.

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22 September - 29 September, 1962

84 On 24 September, the Air Force approved of TSANGHAR as a Dropping Zone for Dakota aircraft, after successful trial drops had been carried out. The logistic base for the operations was, therefore, changed from LUMPU to TSANGHAR.

85 On 24 September, Eastern Command ordered TSANGIE to be occupied by not less than a company. (Annexure 65). This was done under the orders of Chief of the Army Staff and in conformity with the decisions taken at the conference at DEHRI on 16 September, 1962. TSANGIE is important in that it was situated across the HAKKA CHU.

86 The situation on 27 September 1962 was brought out by XXXIII Corps in a signal to Eastern Command in reply to the latter's signal (Annexures 66 and 67 respectively). The signal also indicated the state of relationship between the two formations and thus is of interest. The main points in the signal are given below:- (Annexure 66)

- (a) Enemy strength in THAGIA Area visible to our troops was over a battalion plus. (The build up behind THAGIA has already been brought out).
- (b) 9 PUNJAB was deployed between Bridge 1 to 4 and with one company in TSANGHAR area.
- (c) Remainder of Brigade was due to complete concentration in area LUMPU.
- (d) In the end, it was pointed out that the Corps Commander requested higher commanders not to give orders to move companies and platoons but to give the overall task and leave the details to commanders on the spot.

87 XXXIII Corps signal of 27 September (Annexure 66) was sent to Army Headquarters by Eastern Command to perhaps bring out the difficulty Eastern Command had in dealing with XXXIII Corps. This was sent under a DO (Annexure 68) from EGS Eastern Command to Director of Military Operations, Army Headquarters. The DO also brought out that the one instance Eastern Command had ordered a company was to TSANGIE and that also under orders of COMS.

88 The signal and this correspondence has been referred to as it brings out some important points. These are given below:-

- (a) The mounting friction between GOC in C Eastern Command and GOC XXXIII Corps.
- (b) The occupation of TSANGIE was ordered again and again by Army Headquarters.
- (c) The irritation and frustration felt by lower ~~formations~~ if higher formations ordered minor tactical moves.

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- (d) The build up of the Chinese, even not taking into account their troops immediately behind THAGIA Ridge, continued to be greater than ours.

89 Meanwhile the tension in the THAGIA Ridge mounted and the exchange of fire increased in intensity and duration each time.

90 A pointer to the Chinese method of lulling suspicion was the report from HNB on 28 September, 1962, that Chinese were lecturing to the locals that Chinese and Indian troops would not fight but would settle differences peacefully. At the same time, the SIB reported that the Chinese build up was continuing and an animal transport track had been made to THAGIA. (Eastern Command signal No I 2087, dated 28 September 1962 - Annexure 69).

91 On 29 September, XXXIII Corps submitted their plans for a limited operation, as brought out earlier under major events.

30 September to 4 October, 1962

92 On 3 October, Army Headquarters issued a signal to Eastern Command (Annexure 70) ordering another battalion to reinforce 7 Infantry Brigade and reducing maintenance build up from 45 days to 15 days. The reinforcement by one battalion was, however, not to delay operations. Here again is an instance of Army Headquarters interfering with lower formations. The ordering of this one battalion extra to 7 Infantry Brigade presumably was done after they had received XXXIII Corps plan for limited operations only. The reason for the limited plan, however, was different. It was because of the bottleneck created by the difficulties in logistic build up. Troops, of course, would help, but could they be properly maintained? This, as we will see, was not possible.

93 On 3 October, XXXIII Corps, while ordering the only remaining battalion of 62 Infantry Brigade to move to 7 Infantry Brigade, pointed out to Eastern Command the logistic situation and the implication of reducing maintenance reserve from 45 days to 15 days. (Annexure 71). The main points brought out are given below:-

- (a) 15 days reserve gave no cushion for bad weather, when flying was not possible.
- (b) The situation at TSANGDHAR on 3 October was that there had been no air drop since 20 September and rations in one post had already run out on 2 October.
- (c) Minimum build up accepted at first was 60 days, reduced to 45 days, now ordered to be reduced to 15 days. This was dangerous and unsound and its full implication should be brought to the notice of higher authorities.

94 On 3 October, Army Commander, after a visit to BEIH, arrived in YENGR for a conference with GOC XXXIII Corps. Orders were finalised for the occupation of TSANGHE. This was given out in XXXIII Corps signal issued on 3 October. (Annexure 72). It will be seen that TSANGHE was "ONLY" to be occupied after TSANGHAR had 15 days' supplies and adequate ammunition for fire support. This reservation was included in the orders, as the maintenance of TSANGHE would require a major logistical effort and required channelising the available resources in TSANGHAR area for it. This was perhaps the last important order passed by XXXIII Corps, before they handed over responsibility to IV Corps on 4 October, 1962.

95 Ironically, the last message received from Army Headquarters by XXXIII Corps for NEFA was on the evening of 4 October, 1962, detailing an rifle company to move self-contained for one month to reinforce NALI.

SUMMARY

96 In this Section, we have seen how the developments from 9 September moved quickly and relentlessly towards a situation that could be triggered off into large scale hostilities. We have also seen how unprepared we were in NEFA, which, at that time, was heralded as quite a different "bottle of fish" from LADAKH. It was brought out in newspapers and speeches that, while in LADAKH we may be weak, in NEFA we were strong.

97 It is quite clear that, had the normal chain of command been allowed to function, and advice of communists on the spot followed, we would have approached the problem more methodically; and would have been balanced and in control of the situation. As it was, the Defence Ministry and the General Staff were "hell-bent" tooust the Chinese; and Eastern Command meekly passed on orders received from above. No notice was taken of the Chinese build up, the difficulties of terrain and our logistic limitations. At the receiving end was XXXIII Corps. It acted as a bulwark and refused to be hustled into a gamble that was so obviously militarily unsound.

98 The move of 7 Infantry Brigade to BEOLA area was staved off by XXXIII Corps, in spite of the peremptory orders issued by Eastern Command on 9 September, 1962, and continuous pressures thereafter. XXXIII Corps brought to bear the only military planning in this whole episode and for its pains it was replaced by IV Corps.

99 The "Higher Direction of War" constituted by Defence Ministry and General Staff concerned itself with the odd reaction, here and there, and missed the main crux of the problem - "The Balance and Strength of our Forces on the Defence Line". Troops of a whole brigade were dispersed to outposts that were militarily unsound and logistically unsupportable.

100 Decisions at the highest level were taken without any military appreciation, and no overall plan was made to cater for a major Chinese reaction. Indeed, the very basis of

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Action in NEFA was on a faulty premise that there would be NO reaction. This was, time and again, emphasized by the DIB and the officials of Defence and other Ministries concerned. (Lt Gen IP SEN's Report - Appendix A, Para 6; Lt Gen HM KAUL's Report - Appendix B, Para 70; DIB's view - Annexure 10, Para 7).

101 It is surprising that recommendations of DIB were taken in toto even on tactical military matters. The Military Intelligence Directorate, it appears, was seldom in the picture and perhaps never consulted. The Chinese build up in NEFA and the scant notice taken of it even by the DIB himself shows the gross inadequacy of our Intelligence System. Higher Commanders' lack of confidence in our intelligence was to an extent justified.

102 The intelligence collected was sketchy, and in majority of cases, picked up from rumours prevalent in the border areas. The subsequent collation, evaluation, and dissemination by Military Intelligence lacked cohesiveness and overall assessment of future actions. It is also apparent that Military Intelligence did not assert itself during this period. Lt Col (now Brigadier) IC KATOCH, Incharge of Intelligence on CHINA/TIBET has clearly brought out that, had he known that an offensive action was contemplated, he would certainly have brought out the inevitability of a reaction from the Chinese. He made this known to the DMI, before he left on 9 October. (Annexure V2(1), Para 11). What advice the DMI gave or was allowed to give is not known.

103 Much against XXXIII Corps' wishes the "Defence Line" was irretrievably broken up, particularly in the two vital sectors of NEFA in the KAMENG and the LOHIT Frontier Divisions. Our troops were committed to fighting NORTH of TOWANG, instead of TOWANG and BOMDILA in the KAMENG Frontier Division. In the LOHIT Frontier Division, we were committed to WALONG, an isolated post, dependent on an Otter Airstrip, instead of TEJU, HAYULIANG, the LOHITPUR, which were a part of the original "Defence Line".

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SECTION 4

4 OCTOBER - 20 OCTOBER 1962

FORMATION OF IV CORPS

1 We have seen that, till as late as night 3 October 1962, Eastern Command and XXXIII Corps were planning and working, with no hint or suspicion of a change over of Corps.

2 Army Headquarters SECRET signal of 4 October, 1962 (Annexure 50) announcing the forming of IV Corps was issued at 1400 hours on 4 October and Lt Gen EM KAUL assumed command at TREPUR on arrival at 1700 hours the same day. Yet this was announced dramatically in The Times of INDIA in their morning edition published from DELHI on 5 October. It also brought out in the headlines that General KAUL had left on 4 October and that Indian Army would now be poised for an all-out effort to expel the Chinese from NEFA (Annexure 73).

3 It has been verified that Lt Gen EM KAUL had stated, when flying out to TREPUR, that next day large headlines in the newspapers would announce his precise charter. The inference from this is obvious. He also stated that, if he was not successful, there were chances that the Government would fall.

4 So far effort has been made to keep individual personalities out of this Review. General KAUL, however, must be made an exception, as, from now on, he becomes the central figure in the operations, and important signals and orders from him are on a person to person basis, both to higher as well as lower formation commanders.

5 It is significant that IV Corps was given the responsibility by Army Headquarters of the whole of INDO-TIBET Border in Eastern Command. Yet, the task given verbally to General KAUL by the Chief of the Army Staff was for the eviction of the Chinese from the THAGIA Ridge area. (Appendix B, paragraph 2).

6 On 2 October, GOC-in-C Eastern Command had asked the Defence Minister for the replacement of Lt Gen UMRAO SINGH, GOC XXXIII Corps. (Appendix A, paragraph 11). It was obvious that Lt Gen UMRAO SINGH would not be hustled into an operation, without proper planning and logistic support. The Defence Ministry and, for that matter, the General Staff and Eastern Command were, however, prepared for a gamble on the basis of the Chinese not reacting to any great extent. Thus for the operations to take place early, a new commander and staff had to be found, who would expedite the operation regardless of cost and consequences.

7 The anxiety of Defence Ministry and General Staff to rush the operation can be gauged from the fact that IV Corps was formed and took over operational responsibility the same day.

8 General KAUL mentions in his Report that IV Corps was raised overnight without sufficient troops and logistical support (Appendix B, paragraph 72). This may be true, but

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that General KAUL accepted the task with the resources and with full knowledge of the situation is also obvious.

9 Then again, if he had any misgivings, it was his duty as Chief of the General Staff to have pointed them out to the Government on 3 October 1962.

10 In retrospect, it also appears somewhat hard to understand that, from 3 September 1962 till the Cease Fire on 21 November 1962, the Chief of the General Staff, the key figure at Army Headquarters for operations, was first on leave till 3 October and then appointed IV Corps Commander. No Chief of the General Staff was appointed till after the Cease Fire. Lt Gen EM KAUL, in his report (Appendix B, paragraph 1) brings out that he was recalled from leave and resumed his duties as Chief of the General Staff on 3 October, and, on the same evening, appointed IV Corps Commander. This may well reflect the thinking of the Government, the Chief of the Army Staff, and the Chief of the General Staff himself that the Chinese would not react in a major way. Thus the immediate execution was considered more important than the higher direction.

11 IV Corps Commander, as is obvious from his report (Appendix B, Paras 1 to 4), was fully briefed by Army Headquarters regarding the detailed situation including the background of the DHOM Operations.

12 Both GOC-in-C Eastern Command (Army Commander) and GOC XXXIII Corps were in TEZPUR on 4 October, when General KAUL and his key staff arrived. He was fully briefed by them. Apparently, he was satisfied, as he himself notified both Army Headquarters and Eastern Command that he and his Corps had taken over command from 1700 hours on that date. (Annexure 74).

13 From all the above, it seems clear that the concept of forming IV Corps was to enable General KAUL with his key staff officers to direct a quick operation. Once the operations were completed, the Corps would then perhaps be wound up or in a routine manner established to function as a Corps. There can be no other explanation. No one with any military knowledge would form or accept a Corps to direct major operations on the day of its inception. CSO IV Corps in his report (Appendix C, Para 5) has brought out that Lt Gen KAUL considered that he (General KAUL) was sent out to really expedite the THAGIA Ridge operation, and, once it was completed, his task would be finished.

14 Thus from the start, the higher direction, outlook, and command structure were not balanced for the major operations that subsequently took place.

SITUATION IN NEFA - 5 OCTOBER 1962

General

15 The developments in NEFA accelerated with the incoming of IV Corps and, therefore, it is necessary that

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a stock is taken of the situation obtaining on 5 October 1962.

Deployment

16 HQ 4 Infantry Division

- (a) HQ 4 Infantry Division - TEZPUR
- (b) The HQ 4 Infantry Division (Division Commander and a small staff) - TOWANG
- (c) HQ 4 Artillery Brigade - TOWANG
(This HQ was made responsible for defence of TOWANG).
- (d) Divisional troops less those allotted to brigades - MISMARI - TEZPUR

17 5 Infantry Brigade

Responsible for whole of NEFA less BANENG Frontier Division with Brigade Headquarters at NORTH LAKHIMPUR. The battalions of the Brigade were deployed as under:-

(a) 2 J and K Regiment

- (i) Battalion less three companies - DOPORJIG
- (ii) Two companies - TAKSING
- (iii) One company - LIMKING

(b) 2 MADRAS

- (i) Battalion less two companies - TUPING
- (ii) One company - GILLING
- (iii) One company - MECHUKA

(c) 6 KUMAON

- (i) Battalion Headquarters less two companies - KIBITHOO
- (ii) Two companies - WALONG

(d) 2/8 GORKHA RIFLES (ex 62 Infantry Brigade)

Concentrating in ALONG ex JORHAT.

(e) 4 SIKH (ex 62 Infantry Brigade)

Concentrating in WALONG ex JORHAT.

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18 7 Infantry Brigade

7 Infantry Brigade had been relieved of the responsibility of the protection of TOWANG and 4 Artillery Brigade had been made responsible for it. 7 Infantry Brigade at the insistence of Eastern Command had been moved by forced marches with meagre equipment, clothing, and rations to LUMPU between 2 - 5 October. XXXIII Corps and 4 Infantry Division had, however, despite Eastern Command's pressure, stalled the further move of the Brigade to DHOLA Area, till requisite stocks had been built up there. 9 PUNJAB who had earlier gone for the relief of DHOLA Post had formed a firm base in the area and the Brigade Commander with a small party was up with them carrying out a reconnaissance. The position of the Brigade on 5 October was as under:-

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------------------------|
| (a) Headquarters 7 Infantry Brigade (less Commander's party) | - | LUMPU |
| (b) 9 PUNJAB | - | DHOLA Area |
| (c) <u>2 RAJPUT</u> | | |
| (1) 2 RAJPUT less one company | - | LUMPU |
| (11) One company from LUMPU on way to | - | Bridge 1 |
| (d) 1/9 GORKHA RIFLES | - | LUMPU |
| (e) 4 GRENADIERS | - | Moving upto LUMPU. Concentrated there 9 October 1962. |
| (f) 34(M) Heavy Mortar Battery less troop | - | LUMPU |
| (g) 100 Field Company | - | LUMPU |
| (h) <u>C Company 6 MAHAR MG</u> | | |
| (1) C Company 6 MAHAR MG less one platoon | - | LUMPU |
| (11) One platoon | - | DHOLA Area |
| (j) 24 Field Ambulance | - | TOWANG. Allotted to DHOLA Sector. |
| (k) 31 MSU | - | TOWANG. Allotted to DHOLA Sector. |

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19 4 Artillery Brigade

- (a) Headquarters 4 Artillery Brigade - TOWANG
- (b) 1 SIGN - TOWANG Sector
- (c) 4 CARNAL RIFLES (ex 68 Infantry Brigade) - Moving up from CHANDUAR to TOWANG to relieve 4 GRENADIERS.
- (d) 22 Mountain Regiment
 - (1) HQ 22 Mountain Regiment - TOWANG
 - (11) 7 Mountain Battery - TOWANG
 - (111) Troop 34(M) Heavy Mortar Regiment - TOWANG
- (e) One company 6 MAJAR MG - TOWANG
- (f) 93 Field Ambulance - In process of concentrating in TOWANG.

20 62 Infantry Brigade

Brigade Headquarters - MISHMARI

CONCENTRATION AT DHOLA

Move to DHOLA

21 IV Corps having taken over on 4 October, proceeded at once to expedite the move of 7 Infantry Brigade to DHOLA Area. What could not be achieved by XXXIII Corps during September and early October was hoped to be completed by IV Corps within a matter of days.

223 The bulk of the Brigade was in LUMPU awaiting the stocking of 45 days' reserve of supplies and material in the DHOLA Area. Most of the Brigade had by 5 October just concentrated with bare essentials in LUMPU, and their equipment which could not be carried by the men was in the process of catching up with them. 2 RAJPUT and 1/9 GORNA RIFLES, who were literally taken off the train on their way to peace stations, had little winter clothing. TSAHGHAR, after a number of trail tests, had just been accepted as an emergency dropping zone for para-drops for dakotas. The altitude of the Dropping Zone was over 14,000 feet, and some 4,000 feet higher than the intended location of the troops along the NAMKA CHU. Its capacity had not yet been tested, but it was obvious that it would not be able to support adequately more than a battalion. LUMPU, the previous planned Dropping Zone for the area, was two to three days' porter distance from DHOLA and hence too far to be of any material use. These were grave handicaps and required planned and methodical action, before the Brigade should have been moved to DHOLA.

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23 XXXIII Corps tentatively had laid down 15 October as a possible date for commencement of "LIMITED" operations, but only after certain conditions had been met. These, in the main, were as under:-

- (a) DHOLA Area to be stocked upto 45 days reserves of supplies and material, before the commencement of operations including minimum of three first lines of ammunition.
- (b) Adequate snow clothing to be available in the DHOLA Area for the Brigade.
- (c) Proper medical cover and adequate evacuation arrangements to be established in the area.
- (d) Minimum of a mountain battery and one troop of para field guns was required to support the operation.

24 Commander IV Corps, however, on 4 October, soon after taking over, planned to move the Brigade on morning of 5 October to reach DHOLA Area by 7 October. He did not consider the preconditions as laid down by XXXIII Corps were necessary before the operation could be started. He laid down that D Day for operations would be before 10 October. He informed the Chief of the Army Staff and the Army Commander on 5 October these decisions and the arrangements he was making in a lengthy, personal, EMERGENCY TOP SECRET signal (Annexure 74). This was a forerunner of many such signals, which, at times, took over eight hours to transmit, with consequent holding up of all other traffic.

25 In the meantime, the Army Commander on 4 October had visited ZAMITHANG and TOWANG and met 4 Divisional Commander in TOWANG. There he gave orders for the occupation of TSANGIE by one company immediately. (4 Infantry Division signal No 02094 of 4 October, 1962 - Annexure 75). He also mentioned that a new Corps Commander had been appointed.

26 On 5 October, IV Corps Commander (hereinafter referred to as Corps Commander) had intended to fly to TOWANG to meet 4 Divisional Commander. He, however, flew direct to ZAMITHANG and from there went over to LIMPU in the afternoon. There, he ordered the Brigade Major to move the Brigade forthwith to DHOLA Area to be in position by 7 October. The Divisional Commander, as already mentioned, was in TOWANG, and the Brigade Commander had gone up to DHOLA Area for reconnaissance. The Brigade Major tried to bring out the difficulties faced by the Brigade, but was curtly overruled.

27 The Brigade commenced move early on morning of 6 October on pack basis with one blanket and 50 rounds of ammunition per man. It concentrated by forced marches in DHOLA Area by late evening of 7 October. Apart from 2 RAJPUT and 1/9 GURKHA RIFLES not having winter clothing, the Brigade generally was short of essential clothing and equipment. This can be gauged from the fact that even a minor but most essential item like First Field Dressings were short with units.

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28 The move had been accomplished. Previous planning and ensuring of logistic support for the operations was abandoned. The retribution was to come.

"Their's NOT to reason why;
Their's NOT to make reply;
Their's but to do and die."

Logistic backing

29 Lt Gen HUL mentions in his report (Appendix B, Para 84) the logistical shortcomings he had to face when he took over command of IV Corps. Brig ED PAGHANDA, Brigadier Incharge Administration, IV Corps, in his report (Annexure 76) has brought out at length the shortages in air despatch arrangements, the difficulties in para-drops onto TSANGDHAR and the lack of personnel to clear the dropping zone. In paragraph 22 of his report he has stated that to maintain the extra troops in TOWANG Sector, he required and asked for an additional 1200 x 1-ton vehicles to the 220 then available. In paragraph 23, he has brought out that, for the TSANGDHAR/TOWANG Sector, there was a total requirement of 11,000 pioneers as against 2000 available.

30 The difficulties were no doubt great and commendable work was done to try and overcome them. The shortage of some 1000 x 1-ton vehicles and 9000 pioneers reflects on the enormity of the logistical problem. It was precisely for these reasons that XXXIII Corps and 4 Infantry Division had insisted on prior stocking of DHOIA before the operations could be undertaken. It was height of bad planning and staff work to launch an operation and then mourn the shortfall in resources.

31 The meeting of the demand of 1200 x 1-ton vehicles and 9000 pioneers overnight by any army, let alone ours, is out of the question. It must be remembered that the initiative for mounting the operation was till then ours. It was, therefore, all the more possible and, of course, essential in that difficult country and extreme climate that the tactical plan was based on the available resources. What, however, was done was completely out of context with the realities of the situation. There is no doubt that General HUL's ordering of 7 Infantry Brigade to DHOIA Area for operations, despite being fully briefed regarding the grave logistical shortcomings, can at best only be described as wanton disregard of the elementary principles of war.

Briefing of Corps Commander by 4 Infantry Division Commander

32 On morning 6 October 1962, the Divisional Commander met the Corps Commander at ZAMITHANG. The former brought out the seriousness of the situation created by the move. The Corps Commander thereupon apprised the Chief of the Army Staff and the Army Commander in a personal signal regarding the points brought out by the Divisional Commander (Annexure 77). The main points from the signal are given below:-

- (a) Enemy had strengthened his position and was supported not only by artillery and heavy mortars but had other "dangerous weapons such as RCL guns and automatic rifles".

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- (b) He was convinced that the enemy had, in addition to their forward battalion, a brigade in close support in the THAGIA Area.
- (c) He was, therefore, accelerating the concentration of troops by every means and also taking steps to "entwit the enemy and capture our objectives". Operations would, in any case, start on 10 October.
- (d) The enemy overrunning our troops, however, could not be ruled out. The stakes were high and, in order to specify retrieve the situation, offensive air support must be planned and positioned.

83 It is surprising that the Corps Commander brought out as something new the build up of the Chinese in the THAGIA Ridge Area. This had already been brought out by XXXIII Corps in their appreciation on 30 September (Annexure 49, Para 3) and was well known to the Corps Commander. Then again being convinced there was an equivalent of a brigade of the Chinese supported by artillery in the THAGIA Ridge Area, the Corps Commander continued with his plan of commencing operations by 10 October. It was obvious that 7 Infantry Brigade by that date would have little artillery support and limited ammunition and equipment. Thus a curious situation arose where a Commander with his eyes open was willing to pitch a weak brigade with little artillery support against an enemy of equal strength, which was well supported and in prepared defences.

84 The request for air support was not fully accepted by Army Headquarters. They informed the Corps Commander that, though arrangements for offensive air support would be made, support would only be provided in extreme emergency and with the prior approval of the Government. Army Headquarters considered that we had more to lose by starting an air war than the Chinese, as we were dependent on air for logistic support.

85 One wonders if the collapse of SEIA or the overrunning of BONDIA did not bring about the required state of emergency. We were then no longer dependent on logistical air support in the forward areas in KETA or for that matter CHUSFUL in YADARH.

Preparations in DHOIA Area

86 It is clear that the Corps Commander was determined to conduct 7 Infantry Brigade operation personally. He had told his Chief Signal Officer before leaving TEZPUR that he would only return after 10 October, when operations in the THAGIA Ridge Area had been completed. (Appendix C). The Corps Commander had already taken his GSO 1(Ops) with him and ordered that his Brigadier General Staff, Commander Corps Artillery, and other General Staff Officers, on arrival at TEZPUR, should also join him in DHOIA Area.

87 The Corps Commander's party, including 4 Divisional Commander, left ZAMITHANG on morning of 6 October for DHOIA Area. The Corps Commander was extremely keen that he should reach DHOIA Area quickly. His progress on foot was slow and, therefore, most of the way upto RATHUNGIA he got himself carried by a KHUMPA porter. Unfortunately, this was seen by a great number of

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troops and did not create a very good first impression. The Corps Commander and party, however, reached DHOLA by afternoon of 7 October.

38 In the meanwhile, in the evening of 6 October, TSANGHE had been occupied by one company of 9 PUNJAB. (Annexure 78).

39 Thus, by 7 October, 7 Infantry Brigade had concentrated in DHOLA Area, Corps Commander and party had also arrived, and TSANGHE had been occupied. The stage had been set for the ill-fated operations.

40 On the other side, the Chinese were also building up, but at a much faster rate. A number of reports of the build up had been received. On 7 October, Army Headquarters sent out information received from Consul General DHASA reporting the arrival of some 100 mortars and heavy guns NORTH of THAGIA and the possibility of the Chinese launching an offensive on TOWANG. (Annexure 79). It is not known the extent of credence placed by General Staff Branch Army Headquarters on the report. The very fact it was sent out, however, indicated that some importance was attached to it.

41 This latest report, taken with the previous build up of a division plus makes ominous reading and certainly one that should have made General Staff Branch at Army Headquarters reassess the situation. The sending out of this information to lower formations, without a comment or action by the General Staff Branch, was of little value. In fact, Brigadier General Staff IV Corps discussed this signal with the Corps Commander on 9 October at DHOLA. The Brigadier General Staff and the Corps Commander were of the opinion that the evaluation of the report was the business of the General Staff. (Appendix D).

42 By evening 7 October, the Corps Commander had completed his reconnaissance of DHOLA Area and had discussed the situation with 7 Infantry Brigade Commander and his Commanding Officers. He was in the process of finalising his plans for the commencement of operations. In the meantime, he informed the Chief of the Army Staff and the Army Commander the latest position in the DHOLA Area in a personal signal (Annexure 80). The main points brought out are given below:-

- (a) The Chinese had possibly a regiment (equivalent of a brigade) in the process of being built up in the THAGIA Ridge Area.
- (b) Because of bad flying weather, inaccuracies in air drops, and difficult dropping zones, supply and ammunition position was precarious. (Troops were put on hard scale rations from 8 October 1962).
- (c) Except for 9 PUNJAB, the remainder of the units had still only one blanket and were clad in olive green. (In fact, because of lack of clothing, there were considerable number of fever and pneumonia cases. By 11 October, there were approximately 300 cases of flu and over 24 of pneumonia). These units had only 50 rounds of ammunition per man and their mortars and heavy equipment were still on their way from LUMPU.

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- (d) The Corps Commander required that all available Dakota and Packet aircraft be diverted to DHOIA Operation to make up for the inaccurate drops. (The losses from Packet drops when subsequently started from 9 October were over 70%).
- (e) He considered that whatever initial success he achieved would be in jeopardy as the Chinese were sure to put in a strong counterattack. He, therefore, requested that all military and air resources should be marshalled for restoring the situation.
- (f) He ended up by stating that he would remain with Headquarters 7 Infantry Brigade throughout the course of the operation.

43 The points that at once strike are given below:-

- (a) The results of the hasty move were already being felt. The merely ordering of increased logistic support without taking into account the actualities of the position is NOT a basis on which major moves and operations should be planned.
- (b) The Corps Commander realised the weakness of his position and that the Chinese could at will dislodge any success gained and also retaliate strongly. Yet, as will be seen, he commenced preliminary operations the very next day. It was wishful thinking to have expected "all military and air resources marshalled" and available for DHOIA Area for meeting any counter-offensive by the Chinese.

BATTLE OF SINGJANG (SKETCH H)

Preliminary operations

44 The Corps Commander commenced preliminary operations by occupying SINGJANG with two platoons of which one section was at KARPOIA on 8 October 1962. The Chinese for sometime before this had made it quite clear by shouting and throwing messages that the Indians should not cross the NAMKA CHU. They had not retorted at TSANGIE, which was a considerable distance and at a flank from their defences at THAGIA Ridge. Another reason might well be that TSANGIE, according to the old maps, was in BHUTAN. The occupation of SINGJANG without opposition was notified to Army Headquarters by a signal from the Corps Commander on 8 October 1962. (Annexure 81). This signal also brought out the following:-

- (a) The Chinese positions on THAGIA Ridge dominated ours in DHOIA and Bridge 4 Area including the newly gained areas NORTH of the River.
- (b) The GRENADIERS had been ordered from TOWANG Sector to reach DHOIA Area by 12 October.
- (c) He recommended that 11 Infantry Brigade from NAGA Hills and TUENSANG Area should also be diverted for the DHOIA Operation and to be maintained by air.

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43 The Chinese as in the case of TSANGTIE did not react immediately at SINGJIANG. On 9 October, when there was still no reaction, the Corps Commander considered he had by bold action achieved a major success. He drafted a lengthy signal in the evening which indicated that by vigorous actions, numerous regroupings and introducing element of surprise he had reduced the disadvantage of his relative weakness. He had given a talk to officers and JCOs and found their morale high. He had found the troops willing to undertake any operations despite the handicaps and he had assured them he would remain with them.

44 The signal was, however, premature. On morning of 10 October the Chinese reacted vigorously and we were evicted from SINGJIANG and KARPOIA. The signal was, therefore, not sent, but the filed manuscript copy indicated the Corps Commander's optimism on 9 October 1962. (Annexure 62).

The Battle

47 The battle of SINGJIANG, though a comparatively minor affair, in retrospect, had grave and far-reaching effects, on the subsequent fighting that took place on 20 October. It is, therefore, described in some detail.

48 On the night 9/10 October, Chinese patrols were active in the vicinity of SINGJIANG Post. Two patrol clashes took place in the early morning of 10 October, one from the EAST and the other from the WEST. Both these were held. The Chinese main attack was then under preparation from the EAST.

49 At about 0730 hours a battalion worth of Chinese emerged from their positions on the THAGIA Ridge and charged down towards Bridge 4. Some 800 yards above the NAMKA CHU, they wheeled RIGHT towards SINGJIANG. It was at this time that Major CHAUBERY, the Officer at SINGJIANG, asked for support from MMG Commander at Bridge 4. Two requests were made for MMG and Mortar support to the JCO in charge. The JCO asked permission to open up from the Brigade Commander, who with the Divisional and Corps Commander were at an OP (Observation Post) nearby. The Brigade Commander, after consultation with the Corps Commander refused permission. The JCO after ~~the~~ second request persisted and even went to the extent to suggest that the Corps Commander's party could move away in case the Chinese retaliated on the MMG Post, when the latter opened up. The JCO was convinced that with the ammunition available he could have broken up the attack. The permission, however, was still not granted. (Statement of MMG JCO - Annexure 63 - and Statement by Brig MR RAJWADE, MC - Annexure 64).

50 The Corps Commander's party then left the OP and commenced their march back to HUMPU. The Divisional Commander requested permission to stay back, but was told by the Corps Commander to accompany him.

51 In the meantime, the battle continued and the main attack on SINGJIANG by the Chinese battalion from THAGIA Ridge developed round about midday. Severe casualties were inflicted on the Chinese, especially by the Post at KARPOIA. Orders were issued for the withdrawal of troops at 1230 hours and the troops arrived back by 1536 hours. The Chinese made no effort to follow up the withdrawal. Our casualties were 7 killed, 11 wounded and 7 missing, approximately 50% of the total garrison at SINGJIANG. This large percentage of casualties

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brings out that our troops stood their ground and fought resolutely against heavy odds.

52 The important aspects of the battle that emerge are as under:-

- (a) The Chinese used mortars, and HMG to support their battalion attack against SINGJIANG. On the other hand, no support was given to our two platoons by our main force deployed on the SOUTH of the NANKA CSU. Our mortars and HMGs which could have brought fire to bear with devastating results were stopped from opening up for fear of retaliation on the main positions. This literally meant leaving the two platoons to their fate to fight it out, as best as they could. The effect of this on our troops could well be imagined.
- (b) The Corps and Divisional Commanders left the scene of battle soon after its commencement. This, after the declaration by the Corps Commander that he would stay throughout the operations, must well have reduced the confidence of the troops in the Corps Commander.
- (c) The Chinese allowing our troops to withdraw, which the former could have prevented, may well have had its subtle effect later.
- (d) Our not supporting SINGJIANG brought home to the Chinese our weaknesses as also our poor leadership responsible for bringing about such a situation.

53 Thus the battle of SINGJIANG could well perhaps be the point where the die was cast for the pattern of fighting that subsequently took place in the KAMENG Frontier Division.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

54 The Chief of the Army Staff on 9 October sent an important signal to the Corps Commander in reply to his of the 7th October (Annexures 80 and 85 respectively). This signal brought out that, in view of the situation, there was no sanctity about the date of commencement of operations. It is ironic that because of the length of Corps Commander's 7 October message, it was received by Chief of the Army Staff on the night 8/9 October. By then SINGJIANG had been occupied by us, and by 9 October the Corps Commander was so elated by this achievement that there was no question of his withdrawing the troops from SINGJIANG.

55 In the meantime, further troop movement had been ordered by Army Headquarters and Eastern Command to the Eastern Theatre. These were as under:-

- (a) Move of 65 Infantry Brigade to SILIGURI for SIKIM to replace 62 Infantry Brigade, which had already moved to NEFA.

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- (b) Instead of sending 11 Infantry Brigade to NEFA, as asked for by the Corps Commander, Army Headquarters and Eastern Command arranged to send two battalions from it. These would come under command of 68 Infantry Brigade, whose battalions had already been moved out of the Brigade. The process of breaking up formations had commenced. It was eventually to lead to NO formation in NEFA fighting with its original battalions. (Army Headquarters signal No 161328/MOI of 9 October 1962 and Eastern Command signal No 02250 of 10 October 1962 - Annexure 86).

PERIOD OF INDECISION - 10 - 20 OCTOBER 1962

56 The Corps Commander on his way back ordered 4 Infantry Division to hold all bridges on the NAMKA CHU, but positions NORTH of it - TSANGHE, SINGJANG, KARPOIA to be held at the discretion of 4 Infantry Divisional Commander. (IV Corps signal No 02087, dated 13 October (Annexure 87) and No 02101 of 14 October 1962 - Annexure 88). SINGJANG and KARPOIA, in the meantime, had of course fallen.

57 The battle of SINGJANG came as a shock to the Corps Commander and it was obvious that he was greatly perturbed. He informed Army Headquarters of the grave situation that had arisen and requested that he be allowed to come to DEIRI to explain it to the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister. (IV Corps signal No 111 of 10 October (Annexure 89) and No 02132 of 11 October 1962 (Annexure 90)).

58 A meeting was held in the Prime Minister's House at 2215 hours on 11 October, 1962, and was attended, amongst others, by the Defence Minister, Chief of the Army Staff, Chief of the Air Staff, Foreign Secretary, Cabinet Secretary, and the Director of Intelligence Bureau. No minutes of this meeting are again available with Eastern Command and it is not known if any were kept. From the Army Commander's Report (Appendix A, paragraph 22) it appears that NO decision was taken that night. He, however, mentions that the newspapers the next day reported the meeting and the decision that the Army had been told to evict the Chinese from THAGIA Ridge. It is strange that these meetings were too TOP SECRET for minutes to be kept, yet they were announced in the newspapers.

59 The Prime Minister, in his statement on 12 October to the Press in DEIRI, had stated that the Army had been ordered to evict the Chinese from the THAGIA Ridge Area. He had, however, added that wintry conditions had set in and it was upto the Army to decide the timing for the operations. The task of eviction was already known to the public, as it was brought out in the newspapers on 4 October 1962, when IV Corps was formed. It is obvious that the Prime Minister could not have said anything else. This statement to the Press could not mean anything other than clarifying the position that there might not be any immediate operations. (Army Commander's Report - Appendix A - The Times of INDIA news item - Annexure 91).

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60 The Defence Minister's statement in BANGALORE, however, is more definite. He reiterated that "INDIA would push the Chinese out of NEFA, even if it took one day, a hundred days, or a thousand days, and would fight it out in LADAKH to the last man to the last gun". Thus he publicly confirmed the orders given to Eastern and Western Commands on 22 September 1962. (Annexure 92).

61 The Corps Commander, however, has stated in his Report (Appendix B, paragraph 16) as under:-

"It was decided at this meeting that, as the eviction of the Chinese from the THAGIA Ridge was no longer possible, in view of the factors pointed out above, we should hold on to the NAMKA CHU River line. It was also decided not to thin out from this area."

62 The above statement strives to connect two separate issues. The holding of the River line was certainly a prerequisite for an offensive operation, but, with the latter being called off, the former became redundant.

63 The question where the Brigade should take up its defences was a tactical problem and at best could only be decided by the Field Formation Commanders concerned. The most that could be laid down at Government and Army Headquarters level was perhaps that NO territory SOUTH of the NAMKA CHU River should be lost. The question of how much and where to hold was certainly not possible at that level. Even if this was suggested, it is considered that the Corps Commander, especially Lt Gen BM KAUL, had sufficient standing and influence to position the Brigade, as he thought best.

The lull before the storm

64 There was little actual development in the DRIOIA Area. One more battalion, 4 GRENADIERS, arrived on 14 October. Additional aircraft and greater air despatch facilities were pressed in for stocking in DRIOIA. The position, however, did not materially improve. Recovery was only 30% of the quantities dropped and the stores recovered trickled in slowly to the units, because of the difficult haulage from the Dropping Zone to the units. The civilian porters had deserted and to make matters worse the pioneers at one etage refused to carry loads over the long and difficult distances, because of the extreme cold and the inadequate clothing they had.

65 The actual position of the more important items of supplies, ammunition, and equipment on 16 October 1962 in DRIOIA Area is given below:-

(a) Supplies

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| (i) Atta/Rice | 5 days |
| (ii) Dal | 9 days |
| (iii) Potatoes and vegetables canned | 13 - 15 days |

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|----------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| (iv) | Tea and tinned milk | 15 - 18 days |
| (v) | Sugar | Nil |
| (vi) | Salt | Nil |
| (vii) | Matches | Nil |
| (viii) | Rice | Nil |
| (ix) | Lip Salve | Nil |
| (b) <u>Armaments</u> | | |
| (i) | Infantry battalions less 9 PUNJAB | 50 rounds per man and part of first line. |
| (ii) | 9 PUNJAB | Complete first line. |
| (iii) | 4.2 mor | 432 bombs. (Approximately 150 bombs rounds per available mortar, barely enough for 20 minutes fire support). |
| (iv) | 75 mm how | Approximately 50 rounds. |
| (v) | 3" mor | Approximately 640 bombs rounds. (Barely sufficiently for 10 minutes per battalion mortar section). |
| (vi) | Handgrenades | One per man in infantry battalions. |
| (c) <u>Equipment</u> | | |
| (i) | Blankets | Average of two per man. |
| (ii) | Winter clothing and tentage | Sufficient for approximately 200 - 300 men. |

66 The Brigade continued to be deployed non-tactically along the MAHKA CHU guarding the bridges. The detailed deployment on 19 October 1962 is given below:-

| | | |
|-----|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| (a) | Brigade Headquarters | DHOIA |
| (b) | 4 GRENADIERS less one company | Bridge 1 |
| | One company | KHINZAMANE Area |

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|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|
| (c) 9 PUNJAB less one company | Bridge 2 |
| One company | TSANGIE |
| (d) 1/9 GOREHA RIFLES less one company and one platoon | As Brigade reserve near Brigade Headquarters. |
| One company | Moving to TSANGIE |
| One platoon | TSANGWEAR |
| (e) 2 RAJPUT | Bridge 3, 4, and Log Bridge. |

67 From the above it will be seen that the Brigade was in a precarious position, both for fighting or even for living in the DHOIA Area. This position was given to the Corps Commander by the Divisional Commander on 16 October. (Annexure 93).

Developments in TEZPUR

68 So far this Review is based on information obtained from documents, and the veracity of their contents has been in most cases cross-checked with others. Thus the result could be taken to approximate the truth.

69 From now on, however, documents supporting actions and developments get scarcer and, therefore, at best can only be cross-checked by statements of the various individuals concerned. Efforts have been made, however, to reconstruct the events as accurately as possible taking into account the motives for the actions and circumstances prevailing.

70 The Corps Commander was chiefly concerned with what was to be done next. The Divisional and Brigade Commanders were naturally concerned with what was to happen to the Brigade. It was clear that tactically they could NOT stay in their positions taken up along the NAMKA CHU. Physically, it was getting colder and, in the absence of suitable shelters, the bulk of the Brigade, in any case, would have to be withdrawn. The Brigade Commander was continuously pressing the Divisional Commander for a decision. The Divisional Commander, in turn, approached the Corps Commander in TEZPUR on 14 October, after the latter returned from DEHRI.

71 It has already been brought out that irrespective of the overall decision for the offensive to go in or not the tactical readjustment of the Brigade was in the hands of the Corps Commander.

72 On 14 and 15 October, the Corps Commander had discussions with the Divisional Commander. The theme of the discussions was how and when and with what more preparation could we attack THAGIA Ridge. Curiously, in these discussions the possibility of the Chinese attacking us SOUTH of the NAMKA CHU was never considered. The Divisional Commander strongly recommended

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withdrawal of our troops from TSANGIE and the reducing of our garrison from the DHOIA Area.

73 In the meantime, the Brigadier General Staff IV Corps had made an appreciation on the DHOIA situation. This also clearly brought out that TSANGIE should be evacuated and the DHOIA garrison thinned out. (Appendix D to 4 Division letter No 902/10/GS(OP3) of 16 October 1962. - Annexure 94 - Report of Brigadier General Staff IV Corps (Appendix D) - Statement of Chief Engineer IV Corps (Annexure 84)).

74 In spite of all this advice, the Corps Commander insisted that all Brigades will be held and there will be NO thinning out from DHOIA Area. Indeed, he went a step further and, on 14 October, he countermanded his orders of 10 October regarding TSANGIE. On 10 October, the discretion for holding TSANGIE was given to the Divisional Commander. On 14 October, he ordered that TSANGIE will be held at all cost (Annexure 95).

75 The reasons for Corps Commander insisting on keeping the ill-fated Brigade in their tactically unsound positions and holding on to TSANGIE at all costs cannot be fathomed. Perhaps, there were pressures from DEIHI. In this connection it must be brought out that TAZPUR was specially linked to DEIHI by a direct trunk route.

76 The behind-the-scenes collusion between the Corps Commander and the General Staff at Army Headquarters is well brought out by implication/the developments on 16 October. On that day the Corps Commander presumably discussed the situation either with the Officiating Chief of the General Staff or the Director of Military Operations. The subsequent signals that must have been arranged between them crossed each other and were not with the recipients when they sent their own. The coincidence regarding action in TSANGIE in the two signals is worthy of note.

77 The Corps Commander in his signal painted the general situation and the fact that TSANGIE might be attacked by the Chinese with a battalion. The possible courses open to the Corps Commander regarding TSANGIE were as under:-

- (a) Let the Company at TSANGIE fight it out to the last man last round.
- (b) Resist the enemy to the maximum and withdraw SOUTH of the NAMKA CHU River.
- (c) Reinforce present company strength upto a battalion.
- (d) Give preference to "discretion" over "prestige" and withdraw from TSANGIE.

78 No preference of course was given, inspite of the fact that the Divisional Commander had categorically stated that TSANGIE could not be built up further. The Brigadier General Staff IV Corps also had strongly recommended that our troops from TSANGIE should be withdrawn.

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79 Army Headquarters signal ordered the reinforcement of TSANGIE by a battalion. The signal went on to ask for recommendations for additional requirements to evict the Chinese from the THAGIA Ridge. Curiously, the signal precedes the instructions by referring to conversation between Chief of the Army Staff, the Army Commander, and the Corps Commander on 18 October 1962 in DEHRI. This could only imply to the additional requirement and NOT the reinforcing of TSANGIE. In the meantime, Chief of the Army Staff had asked the Army Commander over the telephone regarding our strength at TSANGIE and our requirements for operations in April/May 1963. This is borne out from a signal from the Army Commander to the Corps Commander on the same day, which asked for information for Chief of the Army Staff on the following:-

- (a) Our strength in TSANGIE.
- (b) What additional resources were required for conducting operations in April/May 1963.

80 From the discussions held in TEZPUR and the signals, it is clear that -

- (a) neither the Chief of the Army Staff nor the Army Commander knew the exact strength at TSANGIE, and hence, Chief of the Army Staff could not possibly be a party to have ordered a battalion to TSANGIE. Presumably, Lt Gen RAUL the General Staff required on paper Chief of the Army Staff's authority for the reinforcing of TSANGIE.
- (b) the initiative of continuing to hold TSANGIE and, if possible, reinforce it, was that of the Corps Commander. In this he was perhaps abetted by the General Staff at Army Headquarters, but Chief of the Army Staff was not in the picture.
- (c) Chief of the Army Staff and the Army Commander were clearly reconciled to the idea that operations were to be postponed to April/May 1963.
- (d) the General Staff Branch Army Headquarters and the Corps Commander had NOT yet given up the idea of immediate operations. General Staff Branch Army Headquarters did not indicate the planning date for operations as April/May 1963 in their signal.

81 It is significant that the Corps Commander in his signal did not ask or suggest that the Brigade should be redeployed despite all the advice he got from his staff and 4 Divisional Commander.

(IV Corps Signal No 03116 of 16 October, 1962 - Annexure 96)
(Eastern Command Signal No 02278 of 16 October- Annexure 97)
(Army Headquarters Signal No 161354/MD1 of
16 October 1962 - Annexure 98.)

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82 On 17 October, the Defence Minister, Chief of the Army Staff, and the Army Commander visited TEZPUR. Lt Gen KAUL in his report (Appendix B, paragraph 18) states that these three reiterated the necessity of holding on to TSANGIE and our positions along the MANNA CHU against his advice.

83 The holding of the MANNA CHU has already been discussed and there seems to be no reason why Chief of the Army Staff or the Army Commander should have taken up such strong views on the dispositions of the Brigade. This especially when their knowledge of the detailed dispositions was from the Corps Commander himself. Regarding TSANGIE, the signal (02180 of 17 October 1962 - Annexure 99) sent by the Corps Commander to 4 Infantry Division on 17 October is revealing. The operative paragraph on TSANGIE reads:-

"after considering various factors involved Government have directed that TSANGIE will continue to be held with the present strength at my discretion".

84 Later on 17 October, the Corps Commander was taken ill and a special plane from DEIRI with a medical specialist flew him back on 18 October. It is not known who gave the decision for his being evacuated to DEIRI, but neither the Army Commander nor the Deputy Director of Medical Services Eastern Command knew about his evacuation. (Army Commander's Report - Appendix A, paragraph 26, DMS Eastern Command's Statement - Annexure 100 - and Report of Col IAL - Annexure 101).

85 The plane and the specialist were sent by the Defence Minister and, therefore, presumably the Defence Minister was in the know of Lt Gen KAUL's evacuation. Lt Gen KAUL states that he also got the concurrence of Chief of the Army Staff. It is surprising that the Corps Commander did not ask permission or even inform his Army Commander of his projected evacuation.

86 In any case, the Corps Commander did not relinquish his command and continued to issue orders from DEIRI. On 18 October, a signal was sent out to increase patrol activity in the vicinity of TSANGIE and Bridge 5. The signal confirmed the following:- (Annexure 102)

- (a) The Company in TSANGIE to stay put.
- (b) One company to operate between TSANGIE and Bridge 5.
- (c) One company to be based on Bridge 5.

87 In the meantime, the Divisional Commander protested against these orders to Corps in TEZPUR. Corps Commander was informed about this by his staff but he was adamant that the orders would be carried out. In fact, he mentioned to his Brigadier General Staff that there were "weighty considerations which he could not disclose on the telephone" for holding on to TSANGIE. He dictated out a personal signal which was later sent to 4 Infantry Division. This signal reiterated that

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build up of TSANGIE will be carried out. "Officers defaulting in executing/implementing these orders will be removed. TSANGIE will be held at all costs." (Report of Brigadier General Staff IV Corps - Appendix D - and Annexure 103). It is obvious, therefore, that the Corps Commander continued to command and issue orders from DEIRI.

TSANGIE Controversy

88 A great deal of attention and consideration from the Defence Minister downwards was paid to TSANGIE. It would, therefore, be worthwhile to summarise the developments that centred around it.

89 It will be recalled that initially XXXIII Corps recommended in August 1963 that TSANGIE should be held along with THAGIA (Pass) in order to ensure the holding of the THAGIA Ridge.

90 TSANGIE was on the NORTH of the NAMEA CHU and the Westernmost locality held by us. Once TSANGIE was required to be held, there was no question that TSANGIE and the entire route from Bridge 1 to Bridge 5 had to be held. This meant the continued deployment of the major portion of the Brigade in the DHOIA Area.

91 TSANGIE in the original maps fell in BHUTAN. By the watershed principle, however, it was clearly in INDIA. Thus, if anything, the question of holding on to TSANGIE should have been taken up with BHUTAN.

92 From the above the points that emerge are as under:-

- (a) Once the intention of capturing THAGIA was given up, the holding of TSANGIE by itself had little meaning.
- (b) The decision of holding TSANGIE automatically committed the Brigade in a tactically unsound posture.
- (c) TSANGIE should not have been treated as a prestige issue and its territorial rights should have been negotiated with BHUTAN.

93 The importance of TSANGIE, it is obvious, was exaggerated much beyond its political prestige or military value. In any case, after 17 October, the discretion of holding TSANGIE was clearly that of the Corps Commander. He should then have withdrawn the troops from there and thus opened the way for the tactical redeployment of the Brigade.

Resumé of the DHOIA developments

94 The holding of TSANGIE and reinforcing it was the responsibility of the Corps Commander. There might have been pressures put on him, but he was fully in the picture that the position was militarily unsound.

95 The defences in the DHOIA Area were the concern of the Corps Commander and, as such, he should have ordered the redeployment of the Brigade, when he realised the strength and superiority of the enemy. It was on his express orders that

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the positions along the River NAMKA CHU were continued to be held by 7 Infantry Brigade.

96 Right or wrong, Lt Gen BM KAUL continued to command IV Corps till 20 October 1962 from DELHI. Why he moved to DELHI in the first instance when adequate medical cover was available in Eastern Command is not known. But in view of the fact that he continued to issue important orders from DELHI, it was all the more necessary that he should have stayed on in Eastern Command and preferably at TEZPUR.

SUMMARY

97 The methodical planning and logistical support insisted upon by XXXIII Corps found NO favour with the authorities. XXXIII Corps, therefore, had to go. Instead IV Corps was formed for the express purpose of expediting operations in the DHOLA Area. It was a means to bring in a new commander buoyed up with the idea that he could evict the Chinese in a matter of days. The formation of a new corps could never otherwise be justified as a sound military move.

98 The very basis of the eviction rested on an erroneous surmise of the Chinese "NOT REACTING" to even a military show of force. By its... Perhaps the Defence Ministry and the DIB had convinced the General Staff Army Headquarters regarding the lack of reaction; or, it may be that they reached the conclusion together. In any case, it is apparent that General Staff Branch Army Headquarters percolated this thinking down to all levels of command and brought about a sense of false complacency. A most dangerous and unmilitary attitude for an Army and one which was to dog throughout the ill-fated operations.

99 Military planning and posture were thrown overboard. Lt Gen KAUL, unheeding of the military situation and unmindful of the essential requirements of the troops, rushed 7 Infantry Brigade into DHOLA Area. Once committed in the area, he refused to redeploy the troops, although he had the time, the authority, and the discretion to do so.

100 The involvement in SINGJANG was again a matter of keeping to a promised date. It could never be called a calculated military move and was certainly not backed up by any military strength. When the bluff was called, our weakness and poor leadership became apparent.

101 Finally, the continued occupation of TSANGLE and the keeping of 7 Infantry Brigade in unsound tactical positions against all military advice was entirely the responsibility of the Corps Commander. In this he was probably abetted by the Officiating Chief of the General Staff and the Director of Military Operations.

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III

CHAPTER III

IV CORPS

LAYOUT

1 The Operations in NEFA can be considered under two sectors as follows:-

(a) KAMENG Sector (4 Infantry Division)

The main Chinese offensive was launched in this Sector, and, after the capture of TOWANG, had two main prongs, one in the WEST against SELA and the other in the EAST centred around BOMDILA. The Operations, therefore, in this Sector are accordingly split under two sub sectors given below:-

(1) SELA Operations - Western Sub Sector

This will deal with the SELA Operations WEST of DIRANG DZONG.

(11) BOMDILA Operations - Eastern Sub Sector

This will include BOMDILA, DIRANG DZONG and other operations carried out EAST of DIRANG DZONG.

(b) Remainder of NEFA (2 Infantry Division)

(1) WALONG Sector

The operations here centred round WALONG and, therefore, require no sub-division.

(11) Remainder of NEFA less WALONG Sector

Not much of consequence took place in this Sector. It is, however, being dealt with to bring out the general advance of the Chinese and will be considered along with the general operations in NEFA.

2 In order, however, to get a connected picture, a resume of operations in NEFA as a whole is first being given. This will bring out the general course of the operations, our own build up, and the possible Chinese build up and moves as reconstructed from various actions. Operations in each sector will then be examined under separate sections. The layout of this Chapter will, therefore, be as under:-

- (a) Section 1 - General Operations NEFA
- (b) Section 2 - WALONG Battle
- (c) Section 3 - Operations in the KAMENG Frontier Division.
- (d) Section 4 - Conclusion.

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SECTION 2KAMENG OPERATIONSGENERAL

1 The KAMENG Operations were conducted by 4 Infantry Division between 20 October and 21 November. The Division had under its command at various times the following Infantry Brigades:-

- (a) 7 Infantry Brigade
- (b) 48 Infantry Brigade
- (c) 62 Infantry Brigade
- (d) 65 Infantry Brigade
- (e) 67 Infantry Brigade

2 The Divisional Headquarters and all these Brigades were broken up due to enemy action and, as such, majority of their documents were lost or destroyed. The operations of 4 Infantry Division, therefore, have been reconstructed from messages available at Corps level, the few records brought back by officers, and the statement of officers, who took part in the operations.

3 4 Infantry Division Operations covered a period of one month. During this period the scene shifted from NAMKA CHU near the McMAHON Line to CHAKU near the Inner Line.

4 In between, there was a pause, when the enemy, having taken TOWANG, was regrouping for the second phase of the offensive. In the second phase there were two distinct operations, one against SEIA and the other against BOMDIA. Between the two places was DIRANG DZONG, the Headquarters of 4 Infantry Division. It naturally influenced both operations and, in turn, was influenced by the developments in the two places. DIRANG DZONG developments will, therefore, be considered along with these two operations. Thus the KAMENG Operations can be conveniently grouped for study as under:-

- (a) Part I

The NAMKA CHU Disaster and withdrawal from TOWANG.

- (h) Part II

Fall of SEIA.

- (o) Part III

Collapse at BOMDIA.

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PART I

THE NAMEA CHU DISASTER AND WITHDRAWAL FROM TOUNG

GENERAL - I

5 The detailed description of the ground in the NAMEA CHU Area and the troop dispositions as on 20 October have already been given in Chapter II (Description of Ground, Section 3, Paras 77 - 83; Troop Dispositions, Section 4, Para 66). Troop dispositions are also shown in Sketch K.

6 The NAMEA CHU River line continued to be held from Bridge 1 to Bridge 5, a distance of some 10 miles, on the orders of the Corps Commander, after the SINGJIANG Battle on 10 October and later confirmed by signal on 13 October (Annexure 95). Orders for reinforcement of TSANGIE were given by the Corps Commander as late as 18 October and reiterated on 19 October (Annexures 102 and 103). We have seen the advice given by the Brigadier General Staff to the Corps Commander for thinning out from the NAMEA CHU Area and withdrawing from TSANGIE (Appendix D, Para 20). We have also seen the repeated representations by the Divisional Commander to the Corps Commander for a decision to organise our positions along the NAMEA CHU and the evacuation of TSANGIE. All these had but little success. (Annexure 94).

7 The net result, however, was that the River line was held and TSANGIE NOT only held but reinforced. In the meantime, the River had appreciably gone down and, by 19/20 October, was easily fordable. (Report of Commanding Officer 9 FUKIAB, Paras 16 and 17 - Annexure 146). Thus the holding of the Bridges had little meaning.

DEVELOPMENTS 19 OCTOBER

Brigade Commander's representation 19 October

8 On 18 and 19 October, heavy build up of the Chinese and dumping of stores (over 1000 mules loads) could be seen on the THAGIA Ridge. Meanwhile, on our side, the situation if anything had deteriorated. Weather conditions had worsened and the turn-round time for porters to carry supplies to TSANGIE had increased from 3 to 5 days. A number of porters had fallen ill and other carried little and those that did in a number of cases throw away their loads on the way. The build up ordered by the Corps Commander for TSANGIE, if carried out, would have further worsened the situation. Troops still had little ammunition and no winter clothing.

9 The Brigade Commander, therefore, on 19 October, strongly represented to the Divisional Commander the seriousness of the situation. He pointed out over the telephone that, with the over-stretched defence layout of the Brigade, the enemy had the capacity to drive a wedge and strike at TSANGIAR. The Brigade Commander, therefore,

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wanted urgent permission to withdraw all troops located WEST of Bridge 4. This would have released him an equivalent of a battalion strength to re-deploy on a reduced frontage and, thus, make the defenses more compact and stronger.

10 The Brigade Commander's feelings on the subject ~~was~~ he gauged from his concluding remarks to the Divisional Commander. These were "I am NOT prepared to stand by and watch my troops massacred. It is time someone took a firm stand. If the higher authorities wanted a scapegoat, I am prepared to offer myself and put in my papers on this issue". (The Brigade Major's Report - Annexure 147 - and Statement of Commander 4 Artillery Brigade - Annexure 148, Para 21). A message incorporating the text of the conversation was also passed on to the Division.

11 The Brigade Commander had represented almost daily before this, but, by 19 October, he had reached the end of his tether. It is apparent so had the Chinese. They struck the next morning.

Chinese activity 19 October

12 Apart from the ~~dumping~~ and the build up seen on the THAGIA Ridge, there were other activities that indicated that the Chinese might force a show down in the near future, if NOT the next day. Some 1000 to 1200 Chinese were seen moving across towards SINGJANG - TSANGIE Area. The Brigade Commander appreciated that either this force would attack TSANGIE or drive a wedge through the Brigade defenses to TSANGDHAR. He, therefore, warned all commanding officers to be vigilant and, in particular, the TSANGIE troops.

13 On night 19/20 October, the Chinese lit a large bonfire in the SINGJANG Area, apparently to act as a ~~landmark~~ for helping the troops to gather in that area, before going in for the attack. The Commanding Officer 2 RAJPUT, located in area Bridge 4 and the Log Bridge, was apprehensive that an attack may be forthcoming. He asked for more ammunition and this was delivered that night by a party of 15 other ranks from TSANGDHAR (Annexure 149).

CHINESE ATTACK 20 OCTOBER

14 The 1000 - 1200 Chinese force moving towards TSANGIE on 19 October and the force that collected in SINGJANG during night 19/20 October crossed the River line between the log Bridge and Bridge 5 before dawn of 20 October. The total strength of the combined force was perhaps a regiment. A battalion of this force went straight for TSANGDHAR.

15 The remainder ~~formed~~ up just before dawn WEST of the RAJPUT Position in the FUP Nullah. The H Hour for the attack was first light, which was approximately 0500 hours. For twenty minutes before H Hour, there was heavy shelling on the RAJPUT and GORAKHA positions; the preliminary softening up before the attack. At H Hour, under cover of an artillery barrage, the Chinese attacked the RAJPUTS from the WEST flank and, after severe hand-to-hand fighting, rolled up the RAJPUT position by 0715 hours.

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16 Part of this force moved parallel but SOUTH of the RAJPUT Position and gave flank protection to the attacking force. This flank protection force met the ASSAM Rifles post SOUTH of Bridge 4 at about 0630 hours and overran them. On RAJPUT Position falling, the Chinese battalions facing the RAJPUTS from NORTH of the River crossed over and, by 0830 hours, captured 1/9 GORKHA RIFLES Positions and Bridge 3.

17 All the while our remaining positions from Bridge 3 to Bridge 1 were being engaged by the Chinese positions facing them on the NORTH of the NAMKA CHU.

18 With 2 RAJPUT and 1/9 GORKHA RIFLES gone, the Brigade Headquarters was in danger of being overrun. The Brigade Commander, therefore, decided to fall back in line with TSANGDHAR. But, in the meantime, the Chinese battalion, detached before dawn for TSANGDHAR, had moved up and, by 1000 hours, TSANGDHAR Dropping Zone was in Chinese hands. We had few defences in TSANGDHAR and the only troops there were those on Dropping Zone duties.

19 The Brigade Commander except for a few minutes was NOT in communication with his battalions. The lines were disrupted and wireless contact could NOT be established, except with two battalions, 1/9 GORKHA RIFLES and 2 RAJPUT, near Brigade Headquarters. Contacts with these also only lasted for a matter of minutes. Brigade was, however, in touch with Divisional Headquarters till 0800 hours, when the former closed down their set to move back. The only information the Brigade Commander got of the fighting was from stragglers that reached Brigade Headquarters from time to time. Thus the Brigade Commander could do little to influence the battle or give orders for a planned withdrawal. The Brigade neither had the manpower and tools or the line equipment to lay duplicate lines that would have been well protected and buried (Annexure 150).

20 Thus, in a matter of two hours, the major portion of the Brigade was rubbed out. 9 PUNJAB on Bridge 2 and 4 GRENADIERS on Bridge 1 were still intact. The Divisional Commander was in touch with both. By 1130 hours, he had appreciated that all positions WEST of Bridge 2 had fallen. There was one notable exception - TSANGLE. 9 PUNJAB had informed the Division earlier that the Company there was NOT attacked, but they (the Company) had seen the fighting in TSANGDHAR. The Company was told to withdraw through BHUTAN.

21 Thus ended the controversy over TSANGLE, over which there was so much discussion and so much effort wasted. The Chinese showed their disdain by NOT even touching it! Or was it because the Chinese wanted to impress on us that they recognised the McMahon Line as marked on the old maps, which showed TSANGLE as being in BHUTAN.

22 The Divisional Commander ordered 9 PUNJAB to withdraw to HATUNGIA from Bridge 2, followed by GRENADIERS on Bridge 1. GRENADIERS to withdraw NOT before 1700 hours, by which time the Divisional Commander hoped 9 PUNJAB would be in position at HATUNGIA. The track along the NAMKA CHU from Bridge 1

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to Bridge 2 was unusable. The Chinese could bring aimed small arms fire all along it from their positions across the River.

23 9 PUNJAB, therefore, withdrew directly SOUTH towards HATUNGIA. (Annexure 146 - Part III). 4 GRENADIERS hung on till 1630 hours, when they were also ordered to withdraw. By then the Track Bridge 1 - HATUNGIA had been cut and, therefore, the battalion skirted WEST of it, and met 9 PUNJAB just WEST of HATUNGIA on night 22 October. HATUNGIA was in the Chinese hands and so was LUMPU (Annexure 146, Paras 9 and 10). These two battalions then, like the rest of the Brigade, did the long trek back via BHUTAN.

24 Thus ended the sorry tale of this ill-fated Brigade, forced into a valley they should never have entered, put into positions they should never have occupied. When the battle came they fought but with little ammunition and less hope.

25 The ordering of the move of the Brigade by the Corps Commander on 5 October, in spite of the protestation of the Brigade Major, was the first step towards the doom of the Brigade. The Brigade Major's Statement - Annexure 151). The second was the SINGJIANG episode. It showed to the Chinese our weaknesses and to our men that our commanders could forsake them. The final step was the inability of, perhaps unwillingness of the Corps Commander to take the responsibility of withdrawing from all positions WEST of Bridge 4 and redeploying the Brigade. The Divisional Commander is to blame to the extent that he should have forced the issue earlier, as did the Brigade Commander on the night before the attack.

WITHDRAWAL TO TOWANG

26 7 Infantry Brigade, for all intents and purposes, ceased to exist after 20 October. The withdrawal to TOWANG mainly consisted of troops of Divisional Headquarters and rear details that the Brigade had left behind in LUMPU and other places moving back as best as they could. The broad outline of the withdrawal has already been given in Section 1. It has little military or historical interest except that the Divisional Commander and staff with 4 Artillery Brigade Commander marched back and reached TOWANG late on 22 October 1962.

EVENTS IN TOWANG

27 Till night 22/23 October, there was little enemy activity in the TOWANG Sector. Brigadier KAIYAN SINGH, Commander 4 Artillery Brigade, with his own headquarters, it will be remembered, was in command of the TOWANG Sector. Brigadier KAIYAN SINGH had gone on 19 October to ZAMITHANG for consultation with the Divisional Commander and later in the withdrawal walked back to TOWANG reaching there by about 1730 hours 22 October 1962.

28 The state of confusion in command and control can be gauged from the fact that the hapless TOWANG garrison had three commanders at one time. The Army Commander, on finding

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Commander 4 Artillery Brigade away from TOWANG with the Divisional Commander, appointed the Commander Corps Artillery, Brigadier MAIR and the Chief Engineer, Brigadier RAJWADE as joint Commanders! Later, to these two, was added Brigadier ME IAL, Commander 62 Infantry Brigade.

29 All these three were present, when, on 22 October, the Divisional Commander and Commander 4 Artillery Brigade arrived. Thus there was a situation, where there was the Divisional Commander without a Division, Commander 4 Artillery Brigade and three more brigadiers all supposed to be commanding some two battalions worth of troops.

30 Happily, the situation was restored, as Commander 4 Artillery Brigade was keen to get back to his own command and the others were perhaps equally keen to give up their joint responsibility.

31 Meanwhile, the Army Commander had attempted to reach ZANIYHANG on 21 October, but could NOT do so as the pilot got orders from base NOT to land. The Army Commander thus missed the Divisional Commander there. On 22 October, he with his Brigadier General Staff flew to TOWANG reaching there at 1430 hours. (Appendix A, Paras 31 and 32). From there he drove up to the Brigade Headquarters in the Monastery area and had discussions with the three joint commanders of the TOWANG Sector. He indicated that he would move two brigades into the TOWANG Sector, as he had been ordered to hold TOWANG at all costs. One of the joint commanders, Chief Engineer Corps, Brigadier RAJWADE pointed out that, with the transport available, it would take some 15 - 20 days.

32 Brigadier RAJWADE also mentioned that the Army Commander told them that 62 Infantry Brigade would be made responsible for the Western approaches to TOWANG. With what he does NOT appear to have clarified. He then asked the three joint commanders to pass it on to Brigadier KALYAN SINGH (Commander 4 Artillery Brigade) and the Divisional Commander. The Army Commander with his Brigadier General Staff then left the Brigade Headquarters and jumped down to the helipad to catch the last helicopter back to TEZPUR, only to find that it had left earlier at 1500 hours.

33 The Chief Engineer informed the Divisional Commander on his return on evening of 22 October regarding the instructions and also apprised him of the fact that the Army Commander had NOT flown back. This perhaps was providential. The Army Commander's plan for inducting two brigades and to hold TOWANG at all costs was clearly far from practical with the resources and time at his disposal (Chief Engineer's Report - Annexure 152, Paras 10 - 12).

34 The enemy thrusts on TOWANG on 23 morning and the appreciation of Brigadier General Staff IV Corps received on night 22/23 October have already been described in Section 1 of this Chapter. There is, however, some confusion over the instructions issued by the Army Commander to the Divisional Commander on the morning of 23 October. There also appears to be a clash of personalities between the two. The Army Commander has stated that the Divisional Commander considered

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that with the trust developing on TOWANG, there was NO other course but to put the "White Flag". The Army Commander would NOT accept.

35 The Army Commander then goes on to state that he ordered the Divisional Commander to hold JANG in an intermediate position and to take up his main defensive position at SEIA. Troops then at LUMIA, SHAKTI, and stragglers were to go via BHUTAN but the remainder were to make for JANG - SEIA (Appendix A, Paras 32 to 34).

36 The Divisional Commander, however, has stated that the Army Commander did NOT discuss any details and said that he (the Divisional Commander) was the man in charge and he should do what he liked. Apparently, the Divisional Commander told him that he would require assistance for his troops both on the JANG route and the route via BHUTAN. The Divisional Commander, in his turn, has hinted that the Army Commander was in a hurry to fly back to TOWANG (Appendix E, para 62).

37 From all reports both the Commanders appear to have been cool and collected and the misunderstanding was perhaps due to a clash of personalities.

38 Any way, the Divisional Commander and the Army Commander were both sceptical about our chances of getting out before the Chinese captured JANG. Brigadier KALYAN SINGH, however, assured both that he would be able to withdraw his troops in time.

39 The orders given by the Divisional Commander to Brigadier KALYAN SINGH was to withdraw to SEIA by the best possible route and the JANG Bridge to blow only after the withdrawal was completed. In the meantime, orders from Corps were received to withdraw to BONDIA. (Annexure 107). The background to this has already been given in Section 1 of this Chapter.

40 In this withdrawal, troops with their equipment managed to come back, but this withdrawal could NOT be called a deliberate operation. It was more a question of getting out of the way of the Chinese rather than getting back in good order.

41 The whole day and night 18 Field Company (BOMBAY SAPPERS) held the Bridge, till relieved by 4 GARHWAL RIFLES. The GARHWALIS for some reason or other panicked on night 24/25 October and were found running back. This was noticed by Brigadier KALYAN SINGH, who soon put up check posts and collected the majority and put them back on the Bridge. The Commanding Officer with 50 men turned up in the morning relieved to see his troops in position. (Brigadier KALYAN SINGH's Report - Annexure 144 - paras 32 - 34).

42 Brigadier KALYAN SINGH helped to turn what would have been a rabble into an organised force. The same battalion was to fight well and more than retrieve the slur on their name caused by their performance that night.

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43 The enemy did NOT pursue our withdrawing troops and, in fact, did NOT really contact our positions around JANG, till late on 25 October. By this time, we had reorganised our defences behind Bridge 8 and had demolished the Bridge.

PART II

FALL OF SEIA

BACKGROUND

44 The build up of 4 Infantry Division and grouping for holding SEIA, DIRANG DZONG, and BOMDIA have been discussed in Section 1 of this Chapter. The final overall deployment of the three brigades as on 16 November has also been covered. The detailed deployment of 62 Infantry Brigade at SEIA and 48 Infantry Brigade at BOMDIA will be covered, when dealing with the defences in the two places. The deployment of 65 Infantry Brigade, based on DIRANG DZONG, will, however, be brought out now, as it has a bearing on the SEIA Operation.

45 On 27 October, 4 Infantry Division issued their Operation Instruction No 3 in signal form. This laid down that 62 Infantry Brigade would be responsible for SEIA; 65 Infantry Brigade in depth to SEIA, responsible for SENGGE Area; and 48 Infantry Brigade for BOMDIA and DIRANG DZONG. Grouping for these sectors was attached as an Appendix. It gave three battalions to the three brigades (Annexure 153).

46 Subsequently, as has been brought out, the plan was altered after Commander 4 Infantry Division's appreciation on 4 November and IV Corps Operation Instruction, issued on 9 November. NO further Operation Instruction was issued by 4 Infantry Division, but, apparently, on verbal orders, the task of 65 Infantry Brigade was shifted from SENGGE to DIRANG DZONG.

47 This also was later changed by the Division, and, under the orders of the Divisional Commander, two battalions of the Brigade were dispersed in company and platoon groups to block approaches both NORTH and SOUTH of the BOMDIA - SEIA road. X

Dispositions of 65 Infantry Brigade on 15/17 November (Sketch P)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| 48 (a) Brigade Headquarters | - DIRANG Camp |
| (b) Headquarters 14 PARAETA with one platoon | - DIRANG Camp |
| One rifle company | - Point 2900 |
| One rifle company | - RONGGA |
| One rifle company | - CHANAR |
| One rifle company less two platoons | - Point 2900 |
| One platoon | - RONGGA |
| One platoon | - Upper SENGGE |

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| (e) Headquarters & RAJPUT with one company less two platoons | - SAPPER Camp |
| One rifle company plus one platoon | - BHUTAN Border (NAGAKURI RAMBA DANG SHIKPU) |
| One platoon | - Bridge 1 near SAPPER Camp. |
| One rifle company | - Point 3682 |
| One rifle company less one platoon | - Point 2898 |

DESCRIPTION OF SEIA AREA AND DISPOSITION OF TROOPS (SKETCH H)

Ground and Troop Dispositions

49 To recapitulate, 62 Infantry Brigade had five battalions under command. These were:-

- (a) 1 SIKH
- (b) 4 GARHWAL RIFLES
- (c) 2 SIKH LI
- (d) 4 SIKH LI
- (e) 13 DOGRA

62 bde
group

50 SEIA Pass 14600 feet is flanked by high peaks on EAST and WEST. On the EAST, the ground rose to over 16000 feet, but, on the WEST, the ground was more gentle rising to 15000 feet, some two miles from the Pass. The ground rose sharply on the SOUTH on the home approach to SEIA and was gentler going down on the enemy side. In fact SEIA viewed from the home side was like the BANIHAI Pass, when approached from the JAMMU side. The layout of the road was also similar. It zig-sagged up on the SOUTH but was NOT so winding going down towards the NORTH.

51 Apart from approaches allowing wider outflanking movements, there were three approaches to SEIA and its vicinity. These from EAST to WEST were as under:-

- (a) A track coming across from TOWANG and skirting WEST of the "Twin Lake" Area and going behind SEIA at SHUKIA. Two companies of 4 SIKH LI were holding the "Twin Lake" Area in temporary positions. Their main positions were further WEST at the Pass itself EAST of the road.

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(b) The Main Road

The road crossed Bridge 3 which was held as a covering troops position by 4 GARHWAL RIFLES. The road then passed through NURANANG, which was held by one company of 1 SIKH LI as a screen position. The road then skirted EAST of KNOLL, a high ~~ground~~ NORTH of the main SEIA Ridge, but separated from it by KAILA Pass. 2 SIKH LI were deployed EAST and SOUTH of the KNOLL astride both the Main Road and the KAILA Pass. At SEIA Pass itself 1 SIKH were located astride the Road and high ground to the EAST of it, and 4 SIKH LI WEST of the Road.

(c) KAILA Pass

This, as has been brought out, was the Pass between the KNOLL and the main SEIA Ridge and was held by two companies of 2 SIKH LI. KAILA Pass gave a comparatively easy approach, from the WEST to the Main Road and the Pass.

52 It will, therefore, be seen that the general layout was as follows:-

- (a) 4 GARHWAL RIFLES were some 8 - 10 miles NORTH of the SEIA Pass holding a covering position. Their task, on falling back to the main defences, was to protect SEIA defences from the rear at SENGE along with 13 DOGRA.
- (b) 2 SIKH LI were some 2 - 3 miles from the main SEIA defences but holding a strong position on the KNOLL and looking after the Main Road and KAILA Pass.
- (c) The core of the defences was formed by 4 SIKH LI WEST of the Main Road on SEIA crest and 1 SIKH astride and EAST of the road. The two companies of 4 SIKH LI in temporary positions in the "Twin Lake" Area were to move back to main 4 SIKH LI positions on withdrawal of covering troops. Both these battalions were mutually supporting and in tactically strong positions.
- (d) The gun areas were between SEIA and SENGE.
- (e) Looking after the SENGE - SHUKIA Area including the Dropping Zone and giving depth to SEIA was 13 DOGRA. On withdrawal from covering troops position in Bridge 3 area 4 GARHWAL RIFLES were to join 13 DOGRA.

Comments

53 The position was tactically a strong one and had plenty of depth. Though the position could be turned it was difficult to capture. Provided there was ammunition and supplies with the unit and maintenance could be ensured, the Brigade could

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have held the defences against heavy odds.

54 As it was, on 17 November, 63 Infantry Brigade stock position was as under:- (Annexure 154, Para 2; Appendix D, Para 110)

- | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| (a) | Supplies | 7 days |
| (b) | Small Arms Ammunition for Infantry Battalions | 1½ to 2 first linee (135 to 180 rounds per gun). |
| (c) | Artillery Ammunition | 1 to 1½ first line (172 to 258 rounds per gun). |

55 In all fairness, this ammunition with a great deal of economy could perhaps have lasted for 7 days at the outside. If once the road was cut, air drops might have helped a bit, but, if the enemy was closely infesting SEIA, it may not have been possible to carry out air drops. Further, the weather at SEIA could NOT be depended upon for more than two days a week. Added to this was shortage of man power, vehicles, and animal transport to clear the Dropping Zone and maintain the units. The Dropping Zone on 17 November had part of the supplies and ammunition still awaiting clearing to the units.

56 These factors are all vital to the question whether SEIA was to be held or the Brigade withdrawn once the road was cut. It was a matter to be balanced between who would last longer - the Chinese, who had cut the road, or the Brigade.

57 Taking the SEIA position by itself, unconnected with the fall of BOMDIA, it would, perhaps, be fair to say that the Chinese would have been hard pressed to maintain their troops in the rear of SEIA. The whole question, however, became academic, once we started reacting to the enemy rather than making him react to us. We frittered away our strength by pushing out small covering forces in all directions and by trying to open road block rather than awaiting him in strong defensive positions.

DEVELOPMENTS IN SEIA ON 17 NOVEMBER

Events before the Decision for Withdrawal

58 On 17 November, starting from first light at 0500 hours to about midday, the Chinese put in four attacks on the covering troops positions held by the GARHWALIS. The enemy were beaten back each time with heavy losses due to artillery and small arms fire. Finally, between 1300 hours and 1500 hours the enemy launched their biggest attack from three directions on the leading company. This was also beaten back, but it was then seen that the enemy in large numbers was attempting a deep out-flanking movement from the EAST. These developments were being continuously reported to Headquarters 63 Infantry Brigade (Annexure 155, Paras 5 - 11). The GARHWALIS had vindicated their action of 24/25 October.

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17 Nov

59 The task of the covering troops having been completed, the Brigade Commander at about 1600 hours ordered according to plan the withdrawal of the battalion. It was obvious that the enemy build up had been completed and these attacks were the prelude to the second offensive. The Brigade Commander also ordered the withdrawal of the 4 SIKH LI companies in the "Twin Lake" Area to their main positions on SEIA. It must again be emphasized that the bringing back of covering and flank protection troops were normal preliminary moves that would occur in any defensive battle. These were in no way connected to the withdrawal that subsequently took place.

60 At about 1800 hours the Divisional Commander had about half an hour's discussion with the Brigade Commander over the telephone regarding the situation in the rest of the Divisional Sector and the future actions of 62 Infantry Brigade. It will be recalled that the Chinese had overrun TENGHANG, a few miles NORTH of BOMDIA by about 1630 hours on the same day and were heading for the Road BOMDIA - DIRANG DZONG. Presumably, by 1800 hours, the Road was closed by the Chinese. This was conveyed to the Brigade Commander by the Divisional Commander. The Divisional Commander had asked the Brigade Commander regarding his ability to fight with the ammunition and supplies the Brigade Commander had at that time. The Brigade Commander from all accounts appeared to be fairly satisfied with the situation and had said that he would be able to fight for 5 - 7 days with the stocks he had. He had repeated this in a conference at Brigade Headquarters later and had also conveyed the same to the Divisional Commander. (Annexure 164, Para 2, and the Brigade Major's Report, Para 10 - Annexure 156). "46"

61 The Divisional Commander, however, considered that the Brigade should withdraw that night and together with 65 Infantry Brigade "bash" their way to BOMDIA. The Divisional Commander could NOT guarantee air supply and he considered withdrawal later than that night may be too late. The Brigade Commander explained the position of the 4 CARBINAL RIFLES and the two companies of 4 SIKH LI, which were in the process of pulling back to the main defences and that any withdrawal at that stage would create panic. As such, he was not prepared to withdraw that night, but he agreed, if ordered to do so, to withdraw on night 18/19 November.

62 There is some misunderstanding in the mind of the Divisional Commander regarding the attitude of Commander 62 Infantry Brigade concerning his position on evening of 17 November. It is quite clear that Brigadier HOSHIAH SINGH was NOT perturbed. The Divisional Commander, however, in his subsequent talks with the Army Commander and the Corps Commander and in his statement has reflected that Brigadier HOSHIAH SINGH was extremely concerned about the situation. (Major General AS PATHANIA's Report - Appendix F, Para 11; Lieutenant-General RM KHUL's Report - Appendix B, para 50). The Divisional Commander subsequently in a clarification on his report to Chief of the Army Staff has brought out that, though there was NO attack on SEIA defences, he had got the impression from Brigadier HOSHIAH SINGH at 2230 hours when the latter spoke to him (Addendum 1 to Appendix F).

63 During his discussion with the Brigade Commander in the evening, the Divisional Commander also ordered that two companies were required by him to open the road-block. The

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transport would be sent by the Division. The Brigade Commander detailed two companies of 13 DOGRA at SENG. These arrived in DIRANG BONG late on night 17/18 November. A company patrol of DOGRA, which had earlier been sent to "Twin Lake" Area had to be recalled back to SENG. This company, had it gone on, might have delayed the Chinese EAST hook from coming on to the rear of SEIA on morning of 18 November.

WITHDRAWAL DISCUSSIONS CORPS COMMANDER/DIVISIONAL COMMANDER

Divisional Headquarters withdrawal

64 There were two issues involved in the withdrawal discussions between the Divisional Commander and the Corps Commander. One was the withdrawal of the formation headquarters from DIRANG BONG to TENGA Valley. This the Divisional Commander had already in mind since the afternoon of 17 November. In fact, a reconnaissance/advance party had been organised on 17 November and the Signal Regiment had loaded their vehicles on that day for move on 18 November. (Annexure 157, Serials 2 and 3).

65 In the evening of 17 November, Commander 4 Infantry Division rang up the Brigadier General Staff IV Corps and wanted to speak to the Corps Commander. As the Corps Commander was away to 2 Infantry Division Sector, the Divisional Commander asked the BGS for permission to withdraw the Divisional Headquarters less Tactical Headquarters to TENGA Valley next day. The BGS did NOT agree to this and told him so. (Appendix D, Para 128 and Annexure 157, Serial 6).

66 Some half an hour or so later, Chief of the Army Staff, accompanied by the Director of Military Operations and the Army Commander arrived at Corps Headquarters. They were apprised of the request of the Divisional Commander. Both COAS and the Army Commander spoke to Commander 4 Infantry Division, but both refrained from giving any decision till the Corps Commander arrived back from 2 Infantry Division Sector. He was expected back shortly.

62 Infantry Brigade Withdrawal

67 After his talks with COAS, Army Commander, and BGS IV Corps, the discussion, as already brought out, between the Divisional Commander and Commander 62 Infantry Brigade took place regarding the withdrawal of 62 Infantry Brigade. (Annexure 157, Serial 6). In the meantime, the Corps Commander arrived, and the Divisional Commander spoke to the former over the telephone at about 1945 hours. This time the Divisional Commander requested permission for 62 Infantry Brigade to withdraw from SEIA, as the situation there was deteriorating fast. It is significant that he did NOT mention to the Corps Commander the Brigade Commander's reaction regarding the holding of SEIA and that the latter was prepared to hold it for a week or more, depending upon the maintenance situation. In fact, he painted the reverse picture and implied that the Brigade Commander was anxious to withdraw. The Corps Commander at first agreed, but subsequently changed his orders. Finally, he sent a signal at 2155 hours on 17 November to withdraw only when position became untenable. (Annexure 158). His first signal permitted the Divisional Commander to withdraw to BOMDIA was cancelled as it was being transmitted, but the order was passed over the telephone by the BGS to 48 Infantry Brigade for relaying to 4 Infantry Division. 48 Infantry Brigade were later informed NOT to pass the order. (Appendix C, Para 30; Appendix D, Para 133).

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68 It is clear that there was a lot of vacillation whether permission should be given or NOT to withdraw. The order passed to 48 Infantry Brigade for relay to 4 Infantry Division naturally must have been heard by signallers all down the line. It is apparent, however, that finally the Divisional Commander was told that he could plan for a withdrawal but firm orders would be given in the morning (Appendix F, Para 12).

WITHDRAWAL ORDERS - 62 INFANTRY BRIGADE

69 In the meantime, Commander 62 Infantry Brigade had prepared his withdrawal orders in great detail for the withdrawal to take place on night 18/19 November. Thinning out of troops was to start by 2 SUE LI thinning out from KROLL area NOT before 1500 hours on 18 November. SEIA defences were to be abandoned by 2100 hours 18 November. The crucial point, however, is that between 1800 - 1900 hours on 17 November Commander 62 Infantry Brigade did NOT plan to move 2 SUE LI that NIGHT; meanwhile, the Divisional Commander had been having telephone conversations with the various people at Corps Headquarters. Having got some assurance from the Corps Commander, the Divisional Commander again rang up Commander 62 Infantry Brigade. The Divisional Commander in his report (Appendix F, Para 12) has stated:- "The Commander 62 Infantry Brigade was, therefore, similarly informed by me. 2 SUE LI being withdrawn back to KUDADONG Ridge (SOUTH of SEIK) we felt could be first lay back position for the Brigade."

70 It is NOT clear as to actually who was the initiator for the plan to withdraw 2 SUE LI from KROLL Area. From the general trend of events it is apparent that the Divisional Commander was more anxious for the withdrawal to take place than the Brigade Commander. It is also clear that, once KROLL Pass and KROLL were uncovered, SEIA could NOT be held for any length of time. It might be that the Divisional Commander, by committing the Brigade Commander to uncover KROLL and KROLL Pass, was firmly committing the still-theo-recalcitrant Brigade Commander into a withdrawal at the latest on night 18/19 November or, may be, earlier. In any case, one thing is certain that the decision was with the full support of the Divisional Commander, if NOT on his initiative.

71 The withdrawal order, as far as it affected 2 SUE LI, was changed at 1800 hours on 17 November. (Annexure 154 - Note at the end). The withdrawal of 2 SUE LI to KUDADONG was to take place that night. This technically was AGAINST the orders of the Corps Commander. The withdrawal of 2 SUE LI that night as will be seen was to have a profound effect and was the main cause of the Brigade withdrawing in disorder.

72 17 November had started off well with the action of the GARDENIES. It was to finish with the Brigade disintegrating.

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THE WITHDRAWAL FROM SEIA

Developments before the actual withdrawal

73 Recapitulation of events on 17th evening

So many talks, cross-talks, orders, and change of orders took place between Brigade, Division, and Corps by 2200 hours on 17 November that it is necessary to recapitulate the situation.

- (a) Late in the afternoon, the Divisional Commander had approached Headquarters IV Corps for permission to withdraw his Headquarters to TENGA Valley. This was NOT accorded.
- (b) The Divisional Commander then had discussions with Commander 62 Infantry Brigade regarding withdrawal of the Brigade on the night 17/18 November. He, however, had accepted the Brigade Commander's recommendations of withdrawing on night 18/19 November.
- (c) Late in the evening, the Divisional Commander had again approached the Corps Commander, but this time, for the withdrawal of 62 Infantry Brigade, and thereby the obvious withdrawal of the Division. The orders from Corps were that planning for a withdrawal could take place, but firm orders would be given on the morning of 18 November. The Divisional Commander then again had a discussion with the Brigade Commander. These two had then decided that 2 SIKH LI positions would be evacuated that night. It may have been on the persuasion of the Divisional Commander, but the Brigade Commander had accepted the withdrawal of the 2 SIKH LI. In fact, the Brigade Major in his report has stated that at 2200 hours the Brigade Commander informed the former that "He (Brigade Commander) had ordered 2 SIKH LI to withdraw that night, as he did NOT want SIKH LI to get involved in a fight at KAILA and so make it difficult for him to withdraw the battalion the next day". (Annexure 156, Para 15).
- (d) Now as far as the battalions were concerned, 4 GARHWAL RIFLES and two companies of 4 SIKH LI were in the process of coming back into the main defences. Outline order for the withdrawal had been given out for withdrawal of the remainder of the units on night 18/19 November. They were thus attuned to the withdrawal the next day. Then suddenly at dead of night comes the order for 2 SIKH LI to commence withdrawing and this is passed on to 4 SIKH LI and 1 SIKH, through whom the former had to withdraw.

74 2 SIKH LI

- (a) There was little enemy activity around 2 SIKH LI defences during night 17/18 November. Thus, when the Brigade Commander's orders came for the

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withdrawal that night, it was a complete surprise to the Commanding Officer. It is believed, he protested to the Brigade Commander, and pointed out that the Brigade Commander was reversing his earlier decision of fighting it out at SEIA. The Brigade Commander, it is understood, expressed his inability to do otherwise, as the orders for withdrawal were from the higher authorities. (2 SINH LI Report - Annexure 159, Para 20).

- (b) Order for withdrawal were issued by the Commanding Officer 2 SINH LI round about midnight and, by 0330 hours, the battalion had concentrated at SEIA. The enemy was NOT in contact with 2 SINH LI during the whole period of the withdrawal. There was some confusion regarding the next task for the battalion. The Brigade Major has stated that the Brigade had planned to withdraw the battalion to NYUKAMADONG. On the other hand, the 2 SINH LI Report clearly brings out that the order for withdrawal to NYUKAMADONG was only given at 0330 hours, when the Commanding Officer contacted the Brigade Commander. The holding of NYUKAMADONG by the 2 SINH LI might have been as a result of two companies of 13 DOGRA being taken away earlier by the Divisional Commander.
- (c) By 0430 hours, 4 GARHWAL RIFLES and the last company of 2 SINH LI had reached SEIA. So far, there was NO contact with the enemy.
- (d) At 0440 hours, the first enemy fire on SEIA was heard from the KAILA Pass direction. This could only be a strong patrol probing our defence, and, finding KAILA empty, occupied KNOLL. It was at this time that the personnel of 1 SINH started leaving their positions. The going back of the two forward battalions was perhaps too much for them. (Annexure 159, Paras 21 - 24).

75

4 GARHWAL RIFLES

- (a) The 4 GARHWAL RIFLES withdrawal from the covering positions was uneventful. The unit must have reached SEIA between 0400 - 0430 hours. The rear companies came under fire of the enemy patrol at 0440 hours, which had occupied KAILA Pass. These two companies, therefore, got separated from the rest of the battalion, but, presumably, rejoined before the battalion moved down towards SENGHE. The report of 4 GARHWAL RIFLES mentions the companies being cut off by the enemy attack. This is NOT borne out by other reports. (Annexure 155, Para 10). The error in the report is perhaps due to the fact that the majority of officers (8 out of 12) including the Commanding Officer are missing.

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- (h) Commander 62 Infantry Brigade had, by this time reached SELA Pass. He was presumably at the Pass soon after the enemy fire opened, that is, 0440 - 0500 hours 18 November. At this stage, he found part of 4 SIKH LI in position. (Two companies had yet to come from the "Twin Lake" Area). 1 SIKH between 0430 - 0445 hours had all but abandoned their positions.

76 1 SIKH

- (a) 1 SIKH have reconstructed developments in their report which is hard to reconcile with facts brought out by other units. They have narrated an enemy attack between 0400 hours - 0500 hours, which clearly could NOT have happened.
- (h) It is clear that the Brigade Commander went to 1 SIKH position between 0440 - 0500 hours and found it abandoned. There was NO enemy in SELA at that time. Giving the most charitable view to 1 SIKH, perhaps the odd Chinese jitter party may have come near the SIKH defences.
- (e) The abandonment of their position by 1 SIKH can never be justified or condoned. There are, however, a number of factors that might have contributed to what amounted to a complete demoralisation of a battalion with a worthy past.
- (d) It was one of the battalions which took part in the withdrawal from BUMIA and perhaps had been overawed by the Chinese. Added to this were the exaggerated stories brought back by stragglers passing through, some of whom were kept in SELA and perhaps spread further alarm and despondency. (Extract from the Report of Deputy Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General 62 Infantry Brigade - Annexure 160, Para 3).
- (s) With this background and the sudden order for 2 SIKH LI to withdraw on night 17/18 November as against 18/19 November, must have increased 1 SIKH's suspicion. Then came the actual withdrawal of 4 GARHWAL RIFLES and 2 SIKH LI. 1 SIKH were cowed on the shop-window worrying about the sudden removal of 2 SIKH LI from in front.
- (f) This is clearly reflected in the conversation the Second-in-Command 1 SIKH had with the Brigade Major at about 0430 hours on the morning of the 18th November. The second-in-command informed the Brigade Major that the Chinese had already come to SELA and were firing from all directions and what were the orders for 1 SIKH? The Brigade Major replied that the orders were clear that there was to be NO WITHDRAWAL till 18/19 November; and, in any case, the Brigade Commander was then on his way to SELA, and would be with them soon.

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The Second-in-Command's reaction to this was that it might be too late then to withdraw.

- (g) This conversation vividly brings out the mood of 1 SIKH and their anxiety to withdraw. The smallest pretext after this would be enough for them to abandon their positions.
- (h) The pretext was soon to come. Firing by the enemy patrol at KALIA Pass started and within a matter of minutes the battalion disintegrated.
- (j) The limit of disintegration can be gauged from the fact that, when at 0900 hours, the Brigade Commander ordered the Commanding Officer 1 SIKH to lead the withdrawal of the Brigade, the Commanding Officer 1 SIKH replied that he had only fifteen men! (Annexure 156, Paras 18, 20 and 27).

THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE BRIGADE

77 The withdrawal at first went off well and in fact there was little enemy interference from the rear (SEIA). Minor enemy opposition was cleared and the advance continued till 1400 hours, when, near SAPPER Camp, major enemy opposition was encountered.

78 This could NOT be cleared and, when darkness fell, command and control was lost, and the Brigade disintegrated.

79 The Brigade paid the price for the folly of holding on to SEIA, and, when once it was there, for being moved out of it to go to the rescue of a Divisional Headquarters, which had already vanished.

PART III

FLIGHT FROM DIRANG DZONG AND COLLAPSE OF BOMDIIA

BACKGROUND

80 It will be remembered that 48 Infantry Brigade reached MISAMARI on 25/26 October and the Brigade Commander with a small staff went up to BOMDIIA on 26 October. The Brigade itself, however, only concentrated in BOMDIIA by 9 - 11 November. The Corps was unable to move the Brigade due to shortage of vehicles and maintenance difficulties. Thus 48 Infantry Brigade had NO more than 5 - 6 days to prepare their defences before the Chinese offensive.

81 All this time, however, 65 Infantry Brigade with its troops was also in BOMDIIA, but with NO charter. The Divisional Commander would NOT give it a task till his recommendation for the relief of Brigadier SAYEED, then Commander 65 Infantry Brigade, was carried through. Thus valuable time was lost in the preparation of the defences of BOMDIIA. (Annexure 161).

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82 Eventually, by 11 November, after various changes in units, 48 Infantry Brigade started to develop BOMDILA defences with units as under:- (Annexure 123, Para 13).

5 GUARDS

1 MADRAS

1 SIKH LI

Developments on POSHINGIA Route (Sketches L and P)

83 On 2 November, the Divisional Commander ordered 48 Infantry Brigade to send a platoon on the POSHINGIA Track. (Sketch L). This platoon was reinforced under the orders of the Divisional Commander with another platoon on 12 November and, finally, the remainder of the company was ordered to join them on 13 November. 5 GUARDS were being gradually committed on the POSHINGIA Track. X

84 On the evening of 15 November, the original platoon of 5 GUARDS at POSHINGIA with ASSAM Rifle personnel were overwhelmed by the Chinese. The Chinese in large numbers headed towards THEMBANG. 48 Infantry Brigade informed Division regarding these developments and requested aerial reconnaissance. The request was put up to Corps but the reconnaissance was NOT arranged.

85 The Divisional Commander ordered one more company of 5 GUARDS to reinforce the company already sent up and who had NOT quite reached POSHINGIA. The task given was to recapture POSHINGIA. This small force sent forward to capture POSHINGIA brings out the little credence given to the reports of 48 Infantry Brigade. The Divisional Commander, however, to be on the safe side as far as approached to Divisional Headquarters were concerned, sent a company of 19 MARATHA from 65 Infantry Brigade to RUNGZA. (Sketch P). RUNGZA lay on a long detour coming from POSHINGIA to DIRANG DZONG and is some three days' march from DIRANG DZONG. Soon the pendulum was to turn and the Division itself would exaggerate the enemy strength and the effect of this threat on the Divisional Sector. //

86 The second GUARDS company moved out on the morning of 16 November with a view to establishing a firm base at THEMBANG and advanced by bounds to POSHINGIA.

87 In the meantime the reports of the enemy's advance towards THEMBANG continued to come in to the Division. The threat to Divisional Headquarters was getting closer. Once THEMBANG was reached, approach to DIRANG DZONG via CHHANDAR was easy and so also the cutting of the BOMDILA - DIRANG DZONG Road. (Sketch P).

88 The Division was now getting properly perturbed and commenced their "plugging of holes" policy. They ordered the following moves:-

- (a) 48 Infantry to send out the whole of/ Brigade 5 GUARDS. The task was to recapture POSHINGIA. Orders for this were given by Division at 1030 hours on 16 November and the battalion moved out between 1400 - 1600 hours. It could NOT be moved earlier as companies from BOMDILA

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defences had to be brought back and the few available porters and ponies at BONDILIA had to be mustered.

- (b) One more company of 19 MARATHA was ordered to CHHAIDAR, a day and half's march from DIRANG DZONG. CHHAIDAR lay on the THEMBAK - DIRANG DZONG track. Orders for this were given by Divisional Headquarters at 1200 hours 16 November. The dispositions of 65 Infantry Brigade on 17 November, after this company's move is given in Sketch P.
- (c) One company of 1 MADRAS from 48 Infantry Brigade was ordered to move on night 16 November to DIRANG DZONG for protection of the Divisional Headquarters.

89 By early morning of 17 November, the GUARDS Battalion reached THEMBAK and, by 1400 hours, they had prepared the essential defences. The enemy soon approached THEMBAK and the battalion engaged them with mortars and automatic weapons. At 1500 hours or thereabout the Chinese launched their first attack, which was beaten back by mortar and small arms fire. Unfortunately, artillery fire was NOT accurate, as the gunner wireless sets for various reasons did NOT function. However, the Brigade Commander, being a gunner, assisted in the shoot on indications given by the Battalion Commander on the wireless. There is NO doubt the Chinese suffered heavy casualties in this engagement. This was verified after the Cease Fire by the Political Officer. It is estimated that between 300 to 400 Chinese were killed (Annexure 162).

90 The enemy then regrouped and after some 15 minutes interval started encircling movements and infiltration. The enemy was engaged all the time, but they managed to come into some dead ground some 100 yards from 5 GUARDS defences. The GUARDS estimated the enemy strength as 1500 to 1700 (a regiment minus). The GUARDS by 1645 hours had expended the bulk of their ammunition. Mortar ammunition had all finished and only a few rounds were left with men. Automatic weapons had practically NO ammunition. 5 GUARDS had moved out quickly without previous preparation and thus could carry little.

91 Under these circumstances the Brigade Commander ordered the withdrawal of the Battalion. It will be remembered that the Division had given orders for the Battalion to advance to POSHINGIA and was thus NOT acting as covering troops and there was, therefore, NO question of their having planned a withdrawal. In close contact and with the light failing, the Battalion planned to withdraw into a nullah in the rear and find their way to BONDILIA, as the Chinese had already cut the track THEMBAK - BONDILIA. Under these circumstances control in the withdrawal was NOT possible. Added to this was the extremely difficult and thick country, that had to be traversed. In fact, an officer patrol of one of the battalions in this very country had got lost in early November and was NEVER found.

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93 This ended the POSHINGIA Battle that should never have been fought. Rushed up to meet the enemy half-way, without sufficient ammunition or well arranged artillery support and logistic backing, the end was inevitable. The battalion without doubt fought well and, if they got disintegrated during the withdrawal, the fault lay elsewhere. It lay with the Division for, again and again, rushing troops without thought of logistic support or time for methodical arrangements.

94 The enemy was expected from POSHINGIA direction even according to the Corps and Divisional appreciation. Thus it was necessary to have a battalion sent up to POSHINGIA, it should have been positioned there earlier. There is, however, no question of a battalion fighting a pitched battle indefinitely against a regiment or more, unless it is to be sacrificed. The Battalion's role should have been only that of covering troops to withdraw as enemy pressure built up and thus be available to fight in the main defences.

95 Thus we see, once again, belittling of the enemy, when the threat was far, and reacting in a frenzied way, when the enemy was on the door-steps.

96 This strange reacting to the enemy was NOT confined to Commander 4 Infantry Division alone. The Director of Military Operations, Brigadier DK PALIT Vr C, who was reported to know a great deal about the country in KAMENG Sector, on hearing of the fall of THEMBANG at TEZPUR on 17 November, advised the Corps Commander that the THEMBANG feature should be counterattacked and recaptured by a battalion. Luckilled, senior counsel prevailed and another battalion was NOT lost. (Appendix F, Paras 7 and 8; Appendix D, Paras 131 and 146; Annexure 163, Paras 19 - 35; and Annexure 123, Paras 15 and 16).

FLIGHT FROM DIRANG DZONG

PREPARATIONS

17 November

96 Presumably NOT having complete confidence in the steps taken to prevent the Chinese from cutting the road and moving into DIRANG DZONG, 4 Infantry Division, after midday of 17 November, started preparation for the move of the Headquarters to TENGA Valley.

97 So far the Divisional Headquarters was living in the Camp Area in huts with NO organised defence layout. Some signal dugouts had been prepared and, on the morning of 17 November, Commander Signals arranged to move his Signal Centre in them. But, later, it was decided that the Divisional Headquarters was to move to TENGA Valley on the morning of 18 November and advance party was to move on 17 November. Accordingly, the Signal Regiment loaded up their vehicles that day. Some of these were later unloaded to bring to DIRANG DZONG the two companies of DOGRAS from SKEGE asked for from 62 Infantry Brigade Commander. (Annexure 157, serials 2, 3, 6, and 7).

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98 Thus, it will be seen that Divisional Headquarters from morning of 17 November were already planning for their move to TEMBA Valley. This was before the Divisional Commander had spoken to Corps Headquarters. We have already seen when dealing with SEIA the reaction of Commander 4 Infantry Division on night 17 November after the fall of THUMBANG and the various telephone calls and manipulations in order to withdraw from DIRANG DZONG and SEIA.

99 In the meantime the Division on night 17/18 November had given orders to Commanding Officer 19 MARATHA to deploy his available troops for the defence of Divisional Headquarters. NO clear orders appear to have been given to the two DOGRA companies and the company of 1 MADRAS. They, however, fetched up early on 18 morning on the MANDIA Ridge to protect the MANDIA Track, the escape route of the Division. (13 DOGRA's Report - Annexure 164, Paras 14, 15, and 16). The Squadron of 7 CAVAIKY, however, were given a vague order that they should be prepared to open the Road DIRANG DZONG - BOWDIA. NO details were given regarding the components of the force that would be in support of the tanks.

100 At 0500 hours 18 November the Second-in-Command 7 CAVAIKY, on a visit to the Squadron, and the Squadron Commander went to Divisional Headquarters to get information regarding their task. They found everything peaceful. In the words of the Second-in-Command 7 CAVAIKY "On seeing the complete absence of any war-like atmosphere we felt that the whole thing was a false alarm".

THE FLIGHT

101 At 0300 hours 18 November the orders from Corps Commander arrived regarding the withdrawal and authority delegated to Divisional Commander to withdraw, if positions become untenable. (Annexure 158). We have already seen the scene at 0500 hours as described by the Second-in-Command 7 CAVAIKY. Presumably, shortly after his departure, the GSO I must have spoken to the Divisional Commander. At 0520 hours, the GSO I informed the Commander Signals that there was a possibility of the Division moving that day. All communications were through, even to TEMPOR. Till 0630 hours there was NO decision. (Annexure 165, Para 2, and Annexure 157, Para 13). 157 Ser 13

102 It was at this time that the company commander of 19 MARATHA from CHHANDAR arrived and there is NO doubt that he was badly shaken. The very fact that he had left his company showed that he had lost his nerve. (Annexure 166, Para 19). He informed the Division regarding the Chinese having reached near MANDIA Spur WEST of DIRANG DZONG. At about the same time the odd firing was heard. This decided the issue. The Divisional Commander hastily ordered 65 Infantry Brigade to withdraw. He informed Commander Signals that he (the Divisional Commander) was going off to see the situation EAST of DIRANG DZONG, and the former should prepare to leave the area. With this he drove off never to return to Divisional Headquarters. (Annexure 166, Paras 3 and 4; Annexure 157, Paras 14 and 15; and Annexure 167, Para 4 - Report of Brig AS CHIMA).

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103 On his way to DIRANG DZONG, he hurriedly visited the Squadron 7 CAVALRY and ordered them to "bash" their way, if they could; if not, to abandon their tanks and withdraw along the MINDIA track. This was perhaps the last order he gave before leaving DIRANG DZONG. (Annexure 165, Para 2).

104 NO information of the withdrawal was given to IV Corps, 68 Infantry Brigade, or 48 Infantry Brigade. Commander Signals 4 Infantry Division, however, informed the Chief Signal Officer IV Corps that the Divisional Headquarters had emptied out by 0745 hours and that he was closing down at 0805 hours (Annexure 166, serial 19). 65 Infantry Brigade were informed as Commander 65 Infantry Brigade was there on the spot. NO coordinated orders, in fact, no orders were given for the withdrawal. It was a matter of everyman for himself; and the "Chinese" claimed the hindmost! A force equivalent of approximately two battalions worth of infantry, a squadron of tanks, and a battery of guns - NOT to mention the hundreds of personnel - disintegrated because of lack of leadership.

105 There were notable exceptions. Capt NN RAMAT, GSO 3(Ops), attempted to hold on, and even tried to push forward. He remained there till 1500 hours with the tanks and some other ranks, while the rest had fled. (Annexure 168, Paras 8 to 14 and 22 to 33).

106 There was a perfectly sound Brigade Headquarters and the Commanding Officer of 19 MARATHA with his battalion. Had some thought been given and a cohesive plan made, an organized force could either have held DIRANG DZONG or even cleared the way to BOMDILA. As it was, Commander 65 Infantry Brigade followed the footsteps of his Divisional Commander. The Divisional Commander had made the Brigade ineffective by dispersing it. But, when the Brigade Commander could have been effective, admittedly without orders from Division, the Brigade Commander was found wanting. His going back in haste may be because of his having been a prisoner of war during the last war. 19 MARATHA came back as an organized body. How much they with others would have achieved if the central authority had NOT dissolved? (Annexure 166, Paras 20, 21, and 22).

107 The senior commanders had, once again, let down the units. There is NO doubt that Headquarters 4 Infantry Division were neither militarily prepared nor mentally adjusted to fight determinedly against the enemy. Before contact, there was complacency bordering to negligence of elementary rules of security. Once the enemy threat was in close proximity, there was incoherent thinking, incorrect statements, wishful plugging of holes and, finally, panic and flight. The name of the Division and indeed that of the Army was destroyed between 0700 - 0800 hours on 18 November.

COLLAPSE OF BOMDILA

BACKGROUND

Description of Ground and Troop Dispositions (Sketch 0)

108 BOMDILA Township lies on a plateau - some 8000 feet high - surrounded by hill features in the shape of a shallow inverted U. The open end of the inverted U is to the SOUTH on the home

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approach. The road runs along a spur in the middle of the opening to the plateau of BOMDIA.

109 The hill features along the inverted U start on the LEFT arm with FLAG Hill. This is the highest feature on this arm but is 2000 yards away from BOMDIA; and the whole hill is thickly wooded and thus has NO vital tactical importance. Moving NORTH to the end of the U is BOMDIA Pass I, through which passed the old track from the NORTH. The track ran along the crest of the BOMDIA Pass I feature for some 1000 yards and then ran SOUTH to BOMDIA. The BOMDIA Pass I feature extended another 1000 yards to BOMDIA Pass II. Through this Pass ran the road to DIRANG DZONG. 1 SIKH LI held this hill feature inclusive BOMDIA Pass I and Pass II. This feature was nearest to BOMDIA and dominated it as also naturally the track and road.

110 On the other arm of the U was located 1 MADRAS holding PALIT Hill and Point 3021. Both PALIT Hill and Point 3021 overlook BOMDIA but were beyond small arms range. 1 MADRAS thus looked after the RIGHT flank of the Brigade defences.

111 In depth were 5 GUARDS looking after the open end of the U from MORTY's Bump to Circuit House and inclusive of the Dropping Zone in BOMDIA.

112 The Brigade Headquarters was located near Circuit House in a hut, but a tactical headquarters in bunkers had been prepared on TAC Spur. On 16/17 November, the Brigade Headquarters was in the process of moving from CIRCUIT House area to TAC Spur but the entire move could NOT be accomplished because of communication difficulties. Thus the Brigade Commander and the Brigade Major stayed at Brigade Headquarters near the Circuit House along with the main signal ~~communication~~, while the rest of the Headquarters was moved to the Tactical Headquarters. The gun areas were SOUTH of TAC Spur.

113 It will be seen that the defences were stretched for a three-battalion defence, but this was the best that could be done under the circumstances. The Brigade had asked for another battalion earlier, but none was given.

114 We have already seen that the entire 5 GUARDS had been lifted under orders of 4 Infantry Division on 16 November. One Company of MADRAS was also moved on 16 November to Divisional Headquarters. Previous to this, one company of SIKH LI had been moved to PHUTUNG SOUTH of DIRANG DZONG. Thus, on 17 November, the normally stretched defences of BOMDIA with three battalions had been depleted to six companies. It was in this situation that the crucial episode of attempting to clear the Road Block was enacted.

CLEARING OF THE ROAD BLOCK BY 48 INFANTRY BRIGADE

115 Sometime in the early night of 17 November, the Chinese, having taken TREMBANG, sent one column via CHHANDAR towards DIRANG DZONG, and the major one closed in on BOMDIA. 48 Infantry Brigade had established a screen of a company strength at the Junction of Main Road and Track TREMBANG - POSHINGIA. A small party of the Chinese bypassed the screen

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and out the road WEST of the Road-Track-Junction.

116 When this information reached Corps Headquarters, presumably after a conference between Chief of the Army Staff, the Army Commander, the Corps Commander, and the Director of Military Operations, it was decided that the Road Block would be cleared by 48 Infantry Brigade. It is remarkable that the Brigadier General Staff IV Corps was removed from the conference, when this tactical decision was taken. None of the four knew the situation in any detail and none knew the layout of the Brigade. Neither had they visited the Brigade, and it is NOT certain if these senior commanders had even seen BOMBIA. (Appendix D, Para 131, and Annexure 123, Paras 18 to 20).

117 Commander IV Corps ordered 48 Infantry Brigade to send out a mobile column of two companies strength to clear the Chinese from the Road. In this he was fully supported by the Army Commander and, presumably, the Director of Military Operations. The latter earlier had even gone to the extent of advising the counter-attack on THEMANG. (Appendix A, Para 44) The Brigade Commander was most unhappy over the situation, but, nevertheless, ordered two companies of 1 SINH LI to stand by. The SINH LI companies were ordered in preference to those of 1 MADRAS, as move of MADRASIS from their defenses would have taken considerably longer. In order to get sufficient troops, the screen at Road-Track-Junction was withdrawn. This removed the only means of getting early information of the Chinese moves. (Annexure 158 and Annexure 123, Paras 18 to 20).

118 At 2030 hours, the Brigade Commander, once again, approached Corps for rescinding the orders. He pleaded that he would be very weak in BOMBIA, which, by then, as already brought out, had one-and-a-half battalions worth of troops against three that were supposed to be there. According to Commander 48 Infantry Brigade, the Corps Commander agreed. The Corps Commander also informed the Brigade that two battalions from 67 Infantry Brigade would arrive by first light 18 November. In any case the two companies did NOT go that night.

119 Thus, on night 17/18 November, the Brigade still had more or less an intact front, but, of course, NO depth.

120 Early on 18 November, the Corps Commander again ordered a force with tanks to be moved out to clear the road block. The Brigade Commander explained that the situation was the same as on the previous night and that he could only send out the force after the two battalions arrived. Apparently, the Corps Commander was satisfied. At about the same time, Brigade Major 48 Infantry Brigade informed GSO 1 regarding the situation. The GSO 1 informed the Brigade Major 48 Infantry Brigade that it may NOT be possible for Headquarters 4 Infantry Division to send out an armoured column from that side. This was the last message from Division to 48 Infantry Brigade. (Annexure 169, Paras 7, 9, and 11) (Appendix B, Paras 56 and 57). In the meantime, advance party of 3 J and K consisting of one officer

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and some 40 other ranks arrived at 0930 hours. The officer in charge informed Brigade that the rest of the Battalion would arrive by midday.

121 At 1030 hours, the Corps Commander, once again, ordered that a strong column supported by tanks should be sent out towards DIRANG DZONG. The Brigade Commander again brought out that the situation had NOT changed and the reinforcement had still NOT arrived. On the other hand, a battalion worth of Chinese were seen heading towards Pass I. The Corps Commander was extremely annoyed and shouted that "whatever the consequence to BOMDIA the force had to be sent out within half-an-hour". There was thus NO other recourse left to the Brigade Commander but to pull out the two companies of the SIKH LI from their defences even when knowing that the enemy were heading towards them.

122 The column moved out at 1145 hours. In the meantime an ad hoc force of 377 Field Company and the advance party of 8 J and K was organised by the Brigade Commander and sent up to fill part of the gap caused by the removal of the two SIKH LI companies.

123 At 1210 hours, the Chinese launched their first attack on BOMDIA. The attack was beaten back. Incidentally, at that time, there was only one platoon in the whole of the 1 SIKH LI Position. Two companies were made up to go with the mobile column. Of the three platoons left behind in BOMDIA, one platoon was on FIAG Hill and one platoon went on a patrol beyond BOMDIA but returned at the time of the attack. (Annexure 170, Para 10; Annexure 123, Paras 23 and 24)-.

124 Another attack was launched by the Chinese at 1315 hours. The two companies of the mobile column had not returned by then. The ad hoc company formed of 377 Field Company and the advance party of 8 J and K had, however, occupied the company position next to Pass 1. This attack was also beaten back. (Annexure 123, Para 25 and Para 11 of 1 SIKH LI Report at Appendix H to this Annexure).

125 Finally, at 1440 hours, when the two companies of the mobile column were on their way up to their position, the major enemy attack was launched by a battalion supported by mortar and automatic fire, and this succeeded in overrunning the improvised Company position at Pass 1 and the one EAST of it. Situation was made more obscure by a mist coming down at that time and, of course, there was the normal dust and din of war.

126 1 SIKH LI at that time were in a most unbalanced state; the company on Pass I was overrun and also the ad hoc force. The company going up to the position EAST of Pass I was caught in the open near their position. Command and control of the 1 SIKH LI was soon lost and, by 1500 hrs, the Commanding Officer came to Brigade Headquarters near Circuit House to report that A and C Companies had been overrun. He was told to occupy the position, failing which to reorganise on School and PIMPLE. Meanwhile, personnel of 1 SIKH LI were

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moving back; these were collected by Brigade Headquarters and sent forward to their Battalion. But, by this time, the rearward move of personnel from the back areas had also started.

127. Commanding Officer 1 SIKH LI was NOT successful in reoccupying the lost ground and, according to his own statement, SIKH LI abandoned their position by 1515 hours. (Para 12 of 1 SIKH LI Report at Appendix H to Annexure 123). Apparently, the withdrawal of 1 SIKH LI, who moved via EAST of TAC Spur heading towards RUPA, was unknown to Brigade Headquarters. But, from the movements and fire of the Chinese, it was obvious that they had occupied the SIKH LI Position.

128 BOMDIIA was seen empty of troops. The Heavy Mortar Position had been abandoned, as it was under direct fire of the enemy. The Mountain Guns had also gone back. The only troops available were the Field Battery who were ordered by the Brigade to fire with open sights at the enemy then closing in from Pass 1. Tanks were also holding the enemy at bay. (Annexure 170, Para 4). Enemy automatic fire, however, was being directed towards Brigade Headquarters and gun positions.

129 At 1600 hours the situation was obviously critical. The enemy were not only holding the heights but had come close to the high ground above Circuit House and in close proximity to BOMDIIA. There were NO troops left except 1 MADRAS, who were intact but some three hours marching distance and on the RIGHT flank. The battalions which were coming up had NOT arrived.

130 The Chinese were seen moving on the WEST flank heading for RUPA. The Brigade Commander at this time decided to pull back from BOMDIIA and, with the help of the two new battalions, hold RUPA, presuming that the battalions would have reached RUPA by then.

131 The Brigade Commander and the Brigade Major tried to contact Commanding Officer 1 MADRAS, but were unable to do so. At 1620 hours, however, the Brigade Headquarters were able to pass a message to 1 MADRAS to withdraw to RUPA. The operator 1 MADRAS had heard the order "Withdraw". (Appendix J to Brig GURBUX SINGH's Report at Annexure 123).

132 The question of Lt Col BHUPINDER SINGH when talking to the Corps at 1620 hours and stating that there was NO one at Brigade Headquarters does NOT seem to be correct. (Appendix D, Para 148 (e)).

133 The Brigade Commander and Brigade Major were with the wireless set next door. The telephone line was out of order from 1535 hours onwards. It was being repaired by Captain MATHUR of the Border Roads Organisation. Lt Col BHUPINDER SINGH apparently came over from his Command Post near the Brigade Technical Headquarters to the Brigade

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Headquarters at 1620 hours. It was at this time that the telephone line was repaired and the telephone rang. Lt Col BHUPINDER SINGH picked up the telephone and spoke to the Brigadier General Staff. Apparently, without confirming, he stated that there was NO one on the spot at BOMDIA. The Brigade Major and the Brigade Commander were at that very moment next door trying to get in touch with Lt Col BHUPINDER SINGH and 1 MADRAS. (Annexure 123, Para 26, Annexure 170, Paras 8 and 9, and Annexure 170 (1)).

184 In any case, the Brigade Commander and the Brigade Major left BOMDIA well after 1620 hours - perhaps between 1630 and 1700 hours. They did NOT take the road, as, by then, it was under intermittent fire, but took a short-cut that hit the road approximately 4 miles SOUTH of BOMDIA. Here they met 3 J and K Regiment going up on foot to BOMDIA. The Brigade Commander ordered a JCO to contact the Commanding Officer, who, apparently, had gone ahead, and gave the former an order for his Commanding Officer that 3 J and K Regiment were to return to RUPA. Presumably, the Commanding Officer went up along the road, whilst the Brigade Commander had taken the track.

185 On reaching RUPA at 1900 hours, the Brigade Commander organised a check post under Major DN SINGH to collect the stragglers in unit groups. At the same time, the Brigade Major was sent back to contact and send forward 6/8 GORKHA RIFLES, who had stopped in TEHA Valley and also to apprise the Corps of the latest situation.

186 From 1900 hours to 2100 hours the Brigade Commander was engaged in organisation RUPA defences and waiting for the Brigade Major and 6/8 GORKHA RIFLES. By 2100 hours, information came that the Commanding Officer 3 J and K Regiment was at BOMDIA. At about the same time the Commanding Officer of 6/8 GORKHA RIFLES came to RUPA. It will be noted that the Commanding Officer was told to contact the Brigade Commander at 1930 hours by the Brigade Major. So far the Brigade Major had NOT come back. Apparently, he was misled by the Commanding Officer 6/8 GORKHA RIFLES (Lt Col GS KALE) that the telephone was a short distance away. In fact it was 10 kilometers away. The Brigade Commander was next to be misled by the Battalion Commander. The Brigade Commander was anxious to go to BOMDIA, but he had equally to inform Corps of the situation. The Battalion Commander volunteered to take him to the "elusive" phone, which, he said, was only half-an-hour's distance away. For two hours they tried to locate the phone in vain and finally at 2300 hours returned to RUPA. The Brigade Commander then went back to BOMDIA, having given orders for 6/8 GORKHA RIFLES to come up.

187 In the meantime, the Brigade Major contacted GSO 1 (Ops) at Corps and gave out the latest situation. The GSO 1, after consultation with the Brigadier General Staff, ordered the withdrawal of the Brigade to FOOT HILLS. If this order had NOT been countermanded, perhaps stability would have been achieved later. (Appendix B, Para 148, and its Appendix E3, entry No 160).

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138 The Brigade Major then went upto BONDIA along with Lt Col GS HALE, who, by that time, had come back to TENGA Valley. At BONDIA, the Brigade Commander, in the meanwhile, was working out plans for a counterattack. On arrival of the Brigade Major with the orders from Corps to move to FOOT HILLS, orders were given for 6/8 GORKHA RIFLES to hold TENGA Valley, whilst the remainder passed through. Orders were then given for the withdrawal from BONDIA. (Annexure 171, Para 10 and Annexure 170, Paras 2 and 10; Annexure 123, Para 31).

139 As the withdrawal was in process from BONDIA, Major MAHAR SINGH from TUSKER Signals came up. He informed Lt Col HALE on his way down that the Corps Commander required that RUPA would be held. The Corps Commander was at that time at FOOT HILLS. Major MAHAR SINGH missed the Brigade Commander, who, however, got the message at 0630 hours, having gone beyond RUPA. The Brigade Commander then came back to RUPA to organise the defences. Whilst orders were being given and troops were moving up the Chinese opened fire from the hills. It was thus too late to hold RUPA. With NO artillery it was NOT possible to retake those heights. (Annexure 123, Para 10; Appendix D, Para 32; (its Appendix EE, entry No 161); Appendix B, Para 59; annexure 170, Para 13 and 14).

140 6/8 GORKHA RIFLES were ordered to act as rearguard upto TENGA Valley and the Brigade to withdraw by stages.

141 What of 1 MADRAS? They appear in this operation as being somewhat unenterprising. They never tried to get information as to what was happening. When ordered to withdraw, they kept clear of the road and NEVER came on to the scene again.

142 At about 0930 hours 19 November, 1 SIKH LI at TENGA Valley apparently got orders from Corps Commander to go to CHAKU to hold a layback position. The SIKH LI were met by GSO 1 (Int) IV Corps at 1105 hours. (Annexure 172, Para 5, and Annexure 123, para 32). At 1105 hours, Corps Headquarters as distinct from Corps Commander, who was at FOOT HILLS ordered that 48 Infantry Brigade would fall back to CHAKU.

143 The Brigade Commander with the rear battalion moved back to CHAKU reaching there after dusk between 1715 - 1745 hours. The Brigade Commander allotted battalion positions to the remnants of 3 J and K Regiment (Approximately one company), the remnants of SIKH LI (approximately two companies) and 6/8 GORKHA RIFLES (approximately three companies).

144 Positions were taken up in the dark. There were NO digging tools and little ammunition. Ammunition, digging tools, and defence stores were asked for from Corps. These, however, because of traffic jams never reached. The Chinese attack on CHAKU developed at 0220 hours on 20 November. The Chinese soon got into our positions. There was NO communications and few had any idea of the ground. The Brigade thus finally disintegrated.

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SUMMARY

149 The unbalanced posture of our forces in the KAMENG Sector on the eve of the Chinese offensive needs NO elaboration. TOWANG, which should have been the main centre of strength, lacked troops; the bulk having been inveigled to a flank in the NAKKA CHU Valley, without adequate logistic support and in tactically unsound positions. That we continued to oblige the Chinese in this unbalanced posture till they struck was as grave an error as the initial sending of 7 Infantry Brigade into the Valley. These two can be combined and categorised as "FUNDAMENTAL ERROR NO 1". The responsibility for this lies with the Corps Commander, though both Army Commander and the General Staff Army Headquarters could easily also have changed it, had they been more decisive.

150 The rout of 7 Infantry Brigade was a foregone conclusion, but, in its wake, it started the snow-ball of defeat, which was to stop a month later and that also at the instance of the Chinese.

151 It is clear that much of this would have been averted had a clean break been made at TOWANG and the withdrawal to BONDIIA had been carried out as planned. The holding of SEIA was accepted by the Army Commander, presumably, at the dictates of the General Staff at Army Headquarters. That SEIA was a strong natural tactical position there is NO doubt, but it required both extra troops and logistic support to hold it. Neither of these were planned or provided for by the General Staff or Eastern Command. Instead the lull between the two Chinese offensives brought about a sense of complacency and IV Corps were given troops haphazardly and in fits and starts. Little provision was made for adequate logistic support.

152 It is agreed that the NEPA battles were the concern of the Corps. It must, however, be made clear that this applied to only the tactical sphere. The overall defensive planning and the provision of logistic support must and always should be the concern of the Command and the General Staff at Army Headquarters. Unfortunately, the reverse happened. There was interference in the tactical level and the overall planning and provision of logistic support was conspicuous by its absence. The decision for holding SEIA and the lack of overall planning and providing of logistic support can be grouped together as "FUNDAMENTAL ERROR No 2". The responsibility for this lies jointly with General Staff Army Headquarters and Eastern Command.

153 The dispersal of forces in penny-packets, the complacency shown in the allotting of defence sectors to brigades, and the lack of urgency in developing defences during the lull period was "FUNDAMENTAL ERROR No 3". For this the major responsibility was that of the Division. It also partly reflects on the poor leadership of the Corps who could have stopped the dispersal and energised the preparation of defences.

154 The pendulum swung the other way, once the second Chinese offensive started. There was frenzied reactions to the Chinese approach to BONDIIA from the NORTH. A battalion was hurriedly ordered up from the main defences of BONDIIA with inadequate ammunition and fire support, and rushed to THEMBAK

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to meet the enemy half-way. In the first instance, the sending of this Battalion to fight it out by itself in hurriedly prepared defences against a regiment or more was a mistake. Besides, even if the Battalion had to be sent, this should have been planned and organised earlier. In spite of these handicaps the Battalion fought well till its ammunition was spent. That it had to withdraw and then get disintegrated is neither the fault of the Battalion nor of the Brigade. The loss of this Battalion, 5 GUARDS, lies squarely on the Division.

155 On the fall of THEMBANG and the possibility of the Road BOMDIIA - DIRANG DZONG being cut and DIRANG DZONG itself being infested brought about a complete frenzy in Divisional Headquarters. Troops from Brigades were rushed for the protection of Divisional Headquarters. Withdrawals were planned and stories concocted to make the withdrawal case stronger. Indeed it reached the pitch when 62 Infantry Brigade was led to believe it was in danger. A withdrawal on its was forced so that Divisional Headquarters could withdraw.

156 NOT content with that the Division committed the Brigade to withdraw within a matter of hours on night 17/18 November the battalion holding KAHIA Pass. This was the turning point in the Fall of SEIA. The withdrawal of this battalion led to the panic in 1 SEKH and the abandonment of SEIA and eventual disintegration of 62 Infantry Brigade.

157 The last role of the Divisional Headquarters was its flight. A strong force of all arms of over 2500 vanished within a matter of minutes. This was NOT the fault of the troops nor of the units but of the lack of centralised leadership and control in the face of the enemy. A coordinated force of that size had more than an even chance of getting to BOMDIIA. Efforts of a few officers, particularly those of Capt NN RAWAT, could NOT, however, replace disintegration of command.

158 All the above Divisional reactions can be grouped under "FUNDAMENTAL ERROR No 4", and was fairly and squarely due to the acts and omissions of Headquarters 4 Infantry Division.

159 The Division dissolved and the last of its brigades was next to be broken up by Corps or more accurately, by a "Triumvirate" comprised of the Army Commander, the Corps Commander, and the Director of Military Operations. Ignorant of the tactical layout, out of touch with the situation in BOMDIIA, they planned and ordered the moving out of a sizeable force from the already bare BOMDIIA defences. NOT that they were NOT warned, and "irrespective of what happened to BOMDIIA" they ordered a force to open the Road BOMDIIA - DIRANG DZONG. For what purpose and for whom on the morning of 18 November is NOT clear.

160 The ordering out of the force was directly responsible for the fall of BOMDIIA. There were four companies left in the BOMDIIA defences. Indeed, on the flank where the Chinese attacked, there was one platoon, where there should have been a battalion. This then was "FUNDAMENTAL ERROR No 5" and it sealed the fate of BOMDIIA. The planners and orderers must take the blame for this.

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161 BONDIA fell. It was now the Corps Commander's turn to give orders and counter-orders as to where the Chinese should be held. It was first BONDIA, then right back to FOOT HILLS, then forward to RUPA, and, finally midway to CHAKU. To blame the hapless Brigade Commander for NOT being able to restore the situation is to find a scapegoat. Under the circumstances, the resistance that was offered and that the Brigade remained a fighting force, despite these orders and counter-orders - some direct to units - was due to the Brigade Commander keeping his head and striving till the last to organize what little force he had.

162 Thus ends the story of the famous "Fighting Fourth". In the end all that could be mustered for the last fight were six weak infantry companies out of a total force of sixteen battalions and countless other troops of the supporting arms and services.

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